

OBAMA'S NOBEL • ATWOOD'S FLOOD

THE Nation



AMERICAN JEWS RETHINK ISRAEL

A NEW GENERATION,
AND A NEW LOBBY,
CHALLENGE
OLD ATTITUDES

ADAM HOROWITZ AND
PHILIP WEISS

CONFESSIONS OF
AN AIPAC VETERAN

HELENA COBBAN

NOVEMBER 2, 2009
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Exchange

Right On, 'Right On'!

GUATEMALA CITY

It's not unusual for *The Nation* to publish something that by itself justifies the whole year's subscription. With the September 28 issue the ante went up. I'd place Kim Phillips-Fein's "Right On" as at least two years' worth. Brilliant, profound, penetrating, lucid and intellectual... But it's not just the dazzle; it's the wisdom and insight.

PAUL MUNSELL

EUGENE, ORE.

Kim Phillips-Fein's historiography of modern conservatism is illuminating, yet her schema of generational changes in how historians have narrated this history cannot escape the history she would reframe. In her story, a first generation of scholars was overly focused on racial backlash in the 1960s. These histories were supplanted by accounts that sought to analyze conservatism as a principled, grassroots movement dating back decades before the 1960s. That story is being succeeded, she argues, by a new generation of histories that properly make political economy the causal agent in history.

One problem with this developmental account of the scholarship is that it too neatly divides historical concerns, falsely splitting anxieties from interests, economics from politics, and race from class. Certainly political economy matters, but its meaning is not self-evident. Actors on the ground (elite and grassroots) had to generate convincing interpretations of economic conditions via a contingent linking of race, anti-elite populism, business conservatism, anti-feminism, anti-statism (and yet military and carceral power) to a triumphant affirmation of national identity. Racial fear, market ideology and evangelical Christianity have no necessary or inherent connection; these positions had to be forged into a coherent worldview across the long post-war era in order for conservatism to become hegemonic. Phillips-Fein is thus right to foreground the role of liberal individualism in conservative success, but she ignores

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how it is made politically meaningful by its mediation through race and gender, by contrast to demonized figures of embodied dependence. Indeed, an exclusive focus on economics or on liberal ideology may unwittingly echo the voices in our political culture—right and left—that would wish away the still-pervasive racial dimension in American political and economic life. Rather than a linear narrative that progresses through different positions, therefore, it seems more fruitful to hold in tension the different elements of conservative ascent. JOSEPH LOWNDES, *author*; *From the New Deal to the New Right: Race and the Southern Origins of Modern Conservatism* GEORGE SHULMAN, *author*; *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture*

TARZANA, CALIF.

Finally historians have the critical distance and vantage point to look back at what has been up to now largely overlooked, and to start to connect the ideological dots and major turning points of the conservative movement's post-'60s emergence. As an overview, the Phillips-Fein essay touches on many of the significant works necessary to place the movement in perspective. A particular case is the conflicted cultural path public education as a liberal institution has taken because of Ronald Reagan's conservative influence. His election in 1980 is considered a standard baseline, but of deeper significance is his election as governor of California in 1966, and the culture war he unleashed on the state's public school system (K-16), which later appeared full blown at the national level. I recommend Kurt Schuparra's excellent *Triumph of the Right: The Rise of the California Conservative Movement, 1945-1966*; W.J. Rorabaugh's *Berkeley at War: The 1960s*; David P. Gardner's *Earning My Degree: Memoirs of an American University President*; and Terrel Bell's political memoir, *The Thirteenth Man*. Bell was Reagan's secretary of education, and Gardner was

(continued on page 24)

Obama's Nobel

As a former chair of the Nobel Peace Prize committee explained in 2001, the award has always been a political act. In giving it this year to Barack Obama, the committee was

endorsing the hope, and relief, felt by millions upon millions around the world at the election of America's new president. The prize was clearly a pointed rebuke to eight years of unilateral recklessness by the Bush administration, which had spurned international organizations and diplomacy, opting instead for preventive war and establishing a network of secret prisons and torture centers. In welcoming Obama's re-embrace of the global community, the committee was, in a way, honoring the millions of Americans who had voted for him—and who, in so doing, have helped redeem America's image.

Did Obama “deserve” this honor? Judging by the conventional standards of accomplishment, the answer is no, of course not, as the president himself acknowledged in his humble acceptance. The committee's official statement insisted otherwise, praising Obama for his “extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy” and attaching “special importance to Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons.” But a hint of a more strategic purpose was provided by the committee's chair, Thorbjørn Jagland, who said, “It's important for the committee to recognize people who are struggling and idealistic, but we cannot do that every year. We must from time to time go into the realm of realpolitik. It is always a mix of idealism and realpolitik that can change the world.” Jagland was signaling the committee's recognition not simply of Obama's promise but of his power—and that of the American people—to turn the world in a more peaceful direction. The award is thus not just a prize but a plea—to the American people as much as to Obama.

So the question for Americans to ask

ourselves is, Do we, the people, deserve the prize? Does our country qualify as a peaceful force in the world? Clearly no, not yet. But do we have the capacity to change? To throw off the bellicose pretensions we have assumed as arrogant Goliath so we can develop a web of more rational and fruitful relations with other nations? That is the audacious proposition Obama has so often put on the table during the past nine months. He allows us to envision radical change in the conduct of our nation.

Repositioning America in the world is an awesomely difficult challenge. Perhaps the prospects for success are easier to see from a distance. Pierre Schori, a former UN ambassador from Sweden, eloquently described Obama's accomplishments in a Swedish newspaper: “He inspires hope for many dispossessed, but also to us who are worried about how dangerous crises are handled.... He is a new kind of American president, a cosmopolitan with the world on his mind.... He did a great thing for peace, beating Bush and McCain policies.... With Obama in the White House, we are all better off and safer.”

None of this hopeful talk lets Obama off the hook for his wrong turns or omissions (see Naomi Klein on page 11). On the contrary, the prize raises the bar for him. May it strengthen his resolve to work for a nuclear weapons-free world; to truly engage Iran; to end rather than escalate the war in Afghanistan. That is where the people come in. Americans who take seriously their role as citizens have been empowered by Obama's inspiring words, and by this prize, to judge him more seriously and hold him, and ourselves, accountable to his idealistic vision of what's possible.

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The ACORN Standard

The nonpartisan Project on Government Oversight and Reform recently revealed that the top 100 government contractors made nearly \$300 billion from federal contracts in 2007 alone. Since 1995 these same contractors have been involved with 676 cases of "misconduct" and were paid \$26 billion in fines to settle cases stemming from fraud, waste or abuse. Fines and other penalties, it seems, are simply the stunningly small price of doing government business.

COMMENT

Take the case of the top three war contractors, Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Northrop Grumman. These companies have engaged in 108 instances of misconduct since 1995 and have paid fines or settlements totaling nearly \$3 billion. In 2007 they won some \$77 billion in federal contracts. Or consider pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, which in September paid \$2.3 billion to settle a slew of criminal and civil cases, including Medicaid fraud. According to the Justice Department, this was "the largest health-care fraud settlement" in its history. Yet Pfizer made more than \$40 billion in profits last year and won \$73 million in federal contracts in 2007; it continues to do robust business with the government. Not bad for a "corporate felon."

Unfortunately, neither Pfizer nor the largest US military contractors are targets of significant Congressional action. Instead it's ACORN, a community organization that trains and advocates for poor and working-class Americans. Over the past fifteen years, ACORN has received just \$53 million in federal funds, much of it for low-income housing. Despite—or perhaps because of—its efforts to empower some 500,000 member families, ACORN was the subject of a sting video produced by a right-wing activist that featured a fake pimp and prostitute seeking tax advice. The group swiftly fired the handful of employees who were entrapped, but that didn't put an end to the storm. Fox News aired the video repeatedly, and right-wing astroturf operative Rick Berman set up a Rotten ACORN website. The campaign was wildly successful. In mid-September all but seventy-five House Democrats and seven senators voted with their Republican colleagues to bar the group from receiving federal funds.

ACORN, like all organizations receiving federal dollars, should be subject to Congressional scrutiny. But ACORN was clearly singled out for political reasons. Those Democrats who voted for the "defund ACORN" bill should be required to explain their reasoning to their constituents, particularly when so few of them have taken substantive actions to apply the ACORN standard to corporate criminals with real rap sheets.

A small but growing number of lawmakers are fighting to confront out-of-control corporations. Here are three legislative initiatives that stand out:

§ HR 3679. Representative Betty McCollum of Minnesota introduced her own ACORN Act—the Against Corporations Organizing to Rip off the Nation Act—which seeks to deny federal funds to "corporations or companies guilty of certain felony convictions." Pfizer is singled out, but the act could be applied to other corporations too. "Why are companies that break the law as a business strategy allowed to receive taxpayer

This week at TheNation.com

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Greg Grandin: Honduran junta in crisis

Greg Kaufmann: Al Qaeda in Afghanistan

Antonio Gonzalez & Miguel Tinker Salas:

Civic revolutions in Latin America

Dave Zirin: NFL must flush Rush

Blogs Editor's Cut: The Burden & the Nobel; Act Now: US Out of Af-Pak!

VideoNation: The bailout in under ten minutes

Calendar: Post your event

Web Letters: Express yourself!

Noted.

PUTTING CHANGE ON HOLD: Since **Barack Obama** moved into the White House in January, the GOP has managed to block at least thirty-two of his appointees and nominations. Using a parliamentary procedure known as a hold, Senate Republicans have kept key positions like secretary of labor and ambassador to Iraq unfilled for weeks. Some positions, such as head of the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC), are still empty. A hold is supposed to be used by senators to buy some time to clear up any confusion and ask questions. Any senator can place one, even anonymously; and like a filibuster, it takes sixty votes to break.

In February, Obama named **Dawn Johnsen** as head of the OLC. Her responsibility would basically be to determine whether the president's policies are legal—a critically important role in light of how the Bush administration used the OLC to justify torture. Using a distorted vision of her work with the prochoice organization **NARAL** as an excuse, Republicans have successfully used holds and filibuster threats to keep Johnsen out of the OLC for eight months. The right also falsely claims that Johnsen once equated motherhood with indentured servitude.

David Hamilton, a widely respected centrist judge nominated by Obama to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, is another nominee trapped in appointment purgatory. Hamilton has been attacked for a litany of bizarre reasons, from his supposed court ruling against Jesus to the time he spent a month going door-to-door for **ACORN** after college. Like Johnsen, Hamilton remains unconfirmed despite having been nominated months ago.

Senators can even place a blanket hold, tying up dozens of appointees at once. This was the case in September when a hold was placed by eight Republican senators against all nominees to the Department of Health and Human Services for what was essentially a skirmish over healthcare reform. Caught up in this hold is Dr. **Regina Benjamin**, the president's choice for surgeon general.

Republicans have also managed to block the appointment of New York Labor Commissioner **M. Patricia Smith**, Obama's choice for Labor Department solicitor, over fears that she secretly used a state program to help unions. Incidentally, business groups also worry Smith will be too aggressive with her new authority to pursue wage violations.

The ease of its use and its remarkable ability to eat up the Senate's time make placing a hold a win-win situation for the GOP. With healthcare reform, cap and trade and many other legislative goals unrealized, every minute wasted by Congress is a minute Democrats can't devote to carrying out their agenda.

ERIC NAING

ICE PROGRAM UNDER FIRE: A program known as 287(g), which allows local and state officials to contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and enforce immigration law, has always had its critics. In 2005, when only three police organizations held 287(g) agreements, Congressman **Bennie Thompson** of Mississippi pondered the program's unpopularity. "I wonder why so few states have signed up for this program. Specifically, does it impact local budgets, adversely affect relationships with immigration communities or burden agencies in a manner that takes their focus off local crime priorities?"

Today, sixty-three police organizations hold contracts with the federal government; pending ICE authorization, eleven more agencies could be added to the roster as early as this week. In July, Secretary of Homeland Security **Janet Napolitano** announced that all participating organizations had to sign a new, standardized contract. They were due in Washington on October 14 and will be reviewed and signed by ICE [see "The End of 287(g)?" at TheNation.com].

In the weeks leading up to the finalization process, the **Congressional Hispanic Caucus** and more than 500 organizations—including the **ACLU** and the **NAACP**—have pressed the new administration to repeal the program immediately. The **Southwest Border Task Force**—composed of law enforcement

and national security experts appointed by Napolitano—recommended in late September that the program be scaled back considerably. On October 12 the **New York Times** published a scathing editorial about the program, writing that "rather than broadening the reach of law enforcement, using local police can cause immigrant crime victims to fear the police and divert the police from fighting crime. It leads to racial profiling, to Latino citizens and legal residents being asked for their papers."

JESSICA WEISBERG

YOUNGE LAURELS: On October 7 *Nation* columnist Gary Younge received Britain's prestigious **James Cameron Memorial Award** for the "extraordinary quality" of his coverage of Obama before and after the 2008 presidential election. The annual prize, whose former recipients include the *Independent's* Middle East correspondent **Robert Fisk**, commemorates James Cameron, the late British foreign correspondent, and is presented to journalists for their "combined moral vision and professional integrity."

In the run-up to last year's presidential election Younge went "under the skin of small town America" and "behind enemy lines" in Republican Roanoke, a swing town in a significant swing state, Virginia. There he wittily and incisively chronicled the eccentricities, emotions and expectations of Roanoke's communities, deftly weaving in his personal experiences and reflections as a black Briton in America. His multimedia reporting, which included a video blog, became a special series for the **Guardian**, with many Roanoke anecdotes and insights also appearing in his monthly *Nation* column.

Younge accepted the award at the James Cameron Memorial Lecture in London and, in a modest quip referencing **Kanye West's** MTV outburst, declared: "**Beyoncé** was the greatest writer of all time."

Still in slight astonishment at his achievement, he says, "I'm delighted to be honored in the tradition of journalists who write about their subjects with passion and compassion and who recognize the responsibilities of their chosen profession."

ANDREA D'CRUZ

funds?” asks McCollum. “A government contract is a privilege, not a right. If a company commits a felony against the people of the United States, then that privilege must end.” Significantly, Wisconsin Representative David Obey, chair of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, has signed on as a co-sponsor. Obey also voted to defund ACORN.

§ In the Senate, Bernie Sanders put forward an amendment to the current defense authorization bill (HR3326 S. AMDT. 2617) that calls on the defense secretary to conduct a wide-ranging study of the money the government pays to contractors that have been indicted, settled charges or been fined by any federal agency, as well as those that have been convicted of fraud. It also calls for recommendations on how to penalize contractors that are “repeatedly” involved with fraud. “Virtually every major defense contractor in this country has, for a period of many years, been engaged in systemic, illegal and fraudulent behavior while receiving hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer money,” says Sanders. While Sanders is just calling for a “study,” the spirit of his amendment could be the basis for legislation that targets corporate criminals receiving federal dollars.

§ Several Congressional offices say they are weighing the possibility of introducing legislation that would apply the ACORN standard to companies like Blackwater, whose operatives will stand trial next year on manslaughter charges stemming from killing Iraqi civilians; or KBR, which is being investigated in connection with the electrocution deaths of US soldiers and contractors in Iraq. Representative Jan Schakowsky says she is considering reintroducing a version of her 2007 Stop Outsourcing Security Act, which sought to ban the use of Blackwater and other mercenary companies from performing armed activities on the federal payroll. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a co-sponsor in the Senate, now oversees the work of Blackwater and other armed State Depart-

ment contractors, increasingly employed in Afghanistan.

Florida Representative Alan Grayson is spearheading calls for fraudulent military contractors to be defunded under the anti-ACORN legislation. He points to Halliburton’s misconduct and its “extreme and gross negligence...putting in showers in Iraq that end up electrocuting soldiers, and feeding them poisoned water.” The federal funding ACORN has received over the past twenty years, Grayson says, “is roughly equal to what the taxpayer paid to Halliburton each day during the war in Iraq.”

JEREMY SCAHILL

Jeremy Scabill, a Puffin Foundation Writing Fellow at The Nation Institute, is the author of the bestselling Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army.

Left Turn in Jersey

Three months ago, before the August town hall meetings, Glenn Beck’s “fifteen minutes” or any of the other developments that have so unsettled Democrats, New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine was the party’s dead man walking. Struggling to get a grip on deficits, spiking unemployment and general economic turmoil, the former Goldman Sachs CEO couldn’t catch a break. Well into the 2009 off-year election season, when New Jersey and Virginia elect governors and send signals about the political zeitgeist, Corzine was feeling the fallout of his failed romance with an ex-state employees union president.

COMMENT

Then came the July arrests of forty-four Garden State mayors, local officials, legislators and community leaders—most of them Democrats—on charges of corruption and money laundering. Corzine wasn’t linked to the wrongdoing, but that didn’t stop his GOP challenger, former federal prosecutor Chris Christie, from exploiting the scandal. Christie’s lead climbed to double digits, with one survey giving him a twenty-three-point advantage. Democratic strategists talked about replacing Corzine to avoid a defeat that would be noted by national pundits as both parties are furiously positioning for the critical 2010 Congressional and gubernatorial election season.

Now, however, as the November 3 vote approaches, Corzine is running even or slightly ahead in polls, as Christie bleeds support among moderate suburbanites to independent Chris Daggett, a former GOP official whose fiscally conservative, socially moderate message recalls former GOP governors Tom Kean and Christine Todd Whitman in a way that Christie—who has been playing to the religious right—does not. The New Jersey race is starting to look like a bright spot for Democrats, who are well aware that even if “all politics is local,” the off-year election results will be spun as a win or a loss for Barack Obama—especially for the president’s initiatives in areas like healthcare reform.

What did Corzine do? Instead of steering to the center, or the Blue Dog right, he turned left. Looking to rally Democratic voters, he patched up shaky relations with the state’s unions and linked his campaign so closely to the president that his billboards now feature images of Obama and Corzine. He ditched plans to

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Three Possible Explanations From The Nobel Committee

1.

Don’t be surprised. Don’t gasp. Don’t faint.
We’ve simply said, “George Bush he ain’t.”

2.

The prize diplomacy can reap’ll
Prevent this guy from bombing people.

3.

Since Henry Kissinger has won,
You know that this is all in fun.

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About Your Professor

Catherine B. Scallen is Associate Professor of Art History at Case Western Reserve

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pick an insider as his running mate, instead selecting State Senator Loretta Weinberg; this 74-year-old reformer has battled the bosses, championed open government and earned marks as the legislature's progressive champion of civil rights, gay rights and consumer protection. And as Congressional Democrats wavered on the issue, Corzine made healthcare reform a focus of his campaign, emphasizing his fierce objections to Christie's plan to lift state mandates requiring insurance companies to cover mammograms, pap tests, autism testing for children and forty-eight-hour hospital stays after birth. Christie said he wanted to ease mandates to reduce costs and make insurance more available. But Corzine's support among women spiked when a pull-no-punches advertising campaign, lavishly funded by the wealthy governor (and not above taking cheap shots regarding Christie's weight problems), highlighted devastating videos of the Republican nominee dismissing a breast cancer survivor's heartfelt concern about the danger of eliminating the mammogram mandate.

Corzine still has a fight on his hands. Despite recent Democratic trends, New Jersey has a history as a bellwether state, where angry voters use the off year to thump the gubernatorial nominee of the party in power nationally. Economic instability and frustration over corruption could yet produce another twist, perhaps even a surge by Daggett, who just won the *Newark Star-Ledger's* endorsement. But Corzine is back in the game; and in a state that takes betting seriously, the odds seem to be shifting in his favor. If the governor is re-elected, national Democrats will argue that they held their own in the first big test of the Obama era. (If Creigh Deeds were to come from behind in Virginia's governor's race, Democrats would get off-year bragging rights, despite Deeds's caution about embracing the party's agenda and its president.)

Corzine offers Democrats something more than the potential to spin a result, however. There are important lessons to be learned from his campaign, particularly about energizing the labor and liberal base and highlighting the human side of the healthcare debate. If he can keep a significant number of swing voters, especially women, in the Democratic column, Corzine will win this year. And savvy Democrats will have a strategy to study as they prepare for next year's contests. JOHN NICHOLS

New Rules for Schools

In October virtually every major media outlet ran a story about a 6-year-old boy who brought a Cub Scout utensil to school in Delaware. The boy wanted to eat his lunch with its little fork, but he ended up being suspended and threatened with reform school because the gadget had a knife on it.

The incident is one of a litany of examples that clearly show how "zero tolerance" school discipline policies have gone too far. The policies are at their worst when enforced by police officers stationed in schools to prevent serious incidents. Too often the cops end up being used as disciplinarians on matters that once would have been handled by school principals. Officers are handcuffing, pepper-spraying and arresting kids for being boisterous

or cursing. The result is a flood of prosecutions and a wave of students denied education.

Child advocates have dubbed this phenomenon "the school-to-prison pipeline." Studies show that children who are jailed or forced to appear in court are more likely than their peers to drop out of school and get into trouble again. And it's unclear whether schools are getting safer.

A startling case in point is the juvenile court system of Clayton County, Georgia, which was buckling to the point of collapse in 2004. In the mid-'90s, after police officers were placed in the schools, the number of kids charged with crimes jumped 600 percent. By 2003, it had jumped another 400 percent. The increase wasn't due to felonies—the cops were enforcing a "zero tolerance" policy against disorderly conduct or disruption.

Juvenile Court Judge Steven Teske saw the problem. School police and probation officers could not do their jobs because the court was overloaded with minor cases that didn't belong there. "Technically, the behavior may be a crime," Teske said, using the example of a kid who gets into a fight to protect his sister. "But it shouldn't be, in the context of adolescent youth behavior."

So Teske brought together school officials, law enforcement, prosecutors, parents and heads of child-services programs. "I am telling you zero tolerance is not improving safety," he told them. Not everyone agreed. But it was obvious that too many kids were getting arrested. Teske proposed something rather ordinary: give kids warnings and a workshop on behavior before dragging them into court. The committee discussed it before a neutral arbiter.

Nine months later, Clayton County had a system that worked. As of 2008, the county had reduced the number of referrals by 68 percent, and in turn had seen another improvement: serious weapons charges were down 70 percent since 2004 (from sixty-three incidents to seventeen). Teske attributes the drop to the fact that officers are spending less time shuttling to court and more time gathering "intelligence" so future incidents can be avoided. Last year, instead of arresting a student who had gotten into a fight, Officer Robert Gardner talked to her. She spoke about a drug dealer's house two blocks from the school. The information led to a search, which yielded two AK-47s, two drums of ammunition, seven handguns, a shotgun, five pounds of pot and \$7,000 in cash.

Everyone wants safe schools. But the Clayton model may prove that the best, most cost-effective way to neutralize violence is not by arresting kids. By paying attention to everyday circumstances, the potential for extraordinary tragedy is defused.

Different communities are now asking Clayton County, How did you do it? In 2008 Jay Blitzman, a judge in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, invited Teske for a lunch meeting with his community. It lasted three hours. Today Middlesex is looking for ways to adapt the Clayton model. Birmingham, Alabama, also plans to use it. And this fall, Teske will be touring the country talking about it with the help of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Maybe there's a lesson here. Paying attention to young people prevents day-to-day injustice. And young people who aren't treated like criminals are less likely to become them. AMY BACH

Amy Bach is the author of Ordinary Injustice: How America Holds Court.

Alexander Cockburn

A Gift From the Ramparts of Capital...

Of the four US presidents who have been given a Nobel Prize—Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama—the one who's shown the cleanest pair of heels when it comes to escaping the world's guffaws for the absurdity of the award is Jimmy Carter.

It's easy to throw mud at TR. The excuse for his prize, awarded in 1906, was his role in ending the Russo-Japanese War. But what the committee of those worthy Norwegians was actually saying was that when it comes to giving a US president the peace prize, the bar has to be set awfully low. After all, TR was fresh from sponsorship of the Spanish-American War and ardent bloodletting in the Philippines.

He accepted the prize not long after he'd displayed his boundless compassion for humanity by sponsoring an exhibition of Filipino "monkey men" in the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair as "the missing link" in the evolution of man from ape to Aryan, and thus in sore need of assimilation, forcible if necessary, to the American way. On receipt of the prize, Roosevelt promptly began planning the dispatch of the Great White Fleet (sixteen Navy battleships of the Atlantic Fleet) on a worldwide tour to display Uncle Sam's imperial credentials.

Wilson, the liberal imperialist with whom Obama bears some marked affinities, won the Nobel Peace Prize for 1919. The rationale was his effort to establish the League of Nations. His substantive achievement was to have brought America into the carnage of World War I and to have refined the language and ideology of liberal interventionism. Between TR and Wilson, it's hard to say who was the more fervent racist. Probably Wilson. As governor of New Jersey he was a fanatical proponent of the confinement and sterilization of "imbeciles," a eugenic crusade that culminated in the US Immigration Act of 1924, which barred Jews and other suspect genetic material from entering the United States. Much against their will, many of these excluded Jews made their way to Palestine. Others involuntarily stayed in place in Russia and Eastern Europe and were murdered by the Nazis. Above all, Wilson at Versailles was the sponsor of ethnic nationalism, the motive force for the Final Solution. And they say Obama's award has brought the Peace Prize into disrepute!

Carter got his prize in 2002 as reward for conspicuous good works. But there again, the message of the Nobel committee was, Take the rough with the smooth. It was Carter, after all, who amped up the new cold war, got Argentinian torturers to train the Contras and above all dragged the United States into Afghanistan. It was in 1978 that a progressive secular government seized power in Afghanistan, decreeing universal education for women and banning child marriage. By early 1979 Carter was hatching plans with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China to arm mujahedeen

and warlords in Afghanistan to overthrow the government and attempt to lure the Soviet Union into combat. In December 1979, after repeated requests from the government in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union sent forces to fight against the rebellion by the fundamentalists. The CIA launched the most expensive operation in its history to train and equip these fundamentalists and allied warlords.

The Nobel Peace Prize committee loves paradox, which is why I tend to believe that it toyed with the idea of giving Hitler the award in 1939, before the Führer's sponsor withdrew the name. But it remained adamant about denying the prize to another nominee in 1939—Mahatma Gandhi—as it had done in 1937 and 1938, and would again in 1947 and 1948. When it came to the man Churchill described as a "half-naked fakir," the committee lost the forgiving appreciation of realpolitik it had evinced in the cases of men like Roosevelt and Wilson and became inflexibly high-minded. Jacob Worm-Müller, a Norwegian history professor who wrote a briefing memo for the committee, remarked censoriously that Gandhi "is frequently a Christ, but then, suddenly, an ordinary politician." Year after year the committee found reasons to reject him.

The chairman of this year's committee, a ductile social democrat called Thorbjørn Jagland, was refreshingly frank about the selection of Obama. They could not, year after year, simply honor peace workers without marquee appeal. He didn't mention it, but last year's recipient, Martti Ahtisaari, the former Finnish president, drew a collective world yawn except among those fuming at his disgusting record as a broker in the dismemberment of the former Yugoslavia. So they decided to shop for the headlines.

People marvel at the idiocy of these Nobel awards, but there's method in the madness, since in the end they train people to accept without demur or protest absurdity as part and parcel of the human condition, which they should accept as representing the considered opinion of rational men. It's a twist on the Alger myth, inspiring to youth: you too can get to murder Filipinos, or Palestinians, or Vietnamese, or Afghans and still win a Peace Prize. That's the audacity of hope at full stretch.

So one shouldn't take these prizes too seriously but simply cheer when a prize committee somewhere does the right thing. What do Paul Robeson, Bertolt Brecht and Pablo Neruda all have in common? They won the International Stalin Prize for Strengthening Peace Among Peoples, which was in business from 1950 to 1955. Then it became the International Lenin Prize, honoring many estimable toilers for human betterment, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Salvador Allende, Sean MacBride and Angela Davis. Read that list and you rapidly get a fix on the outer limits of the Nobel committee's range of political sympathy. Obama's award was a gift dispensed from the battlements of capital, recognizing that empire is in a safe pair of hands. ■



Katha Pollitt

German Party Politics: Color Them Blurry

Berlin

My friends here are still depressed about the September 29 elections, which as you probably know will allow Chancellor Angela Merkel of the Christian Democrats (black, in the political color code) to form a government with the pro-business, anti-tax Free Democrats (yellow) instead of the Social Democrats, or SPD (red). The SPD were the day's big losers: they garnered only 23 percent of the vote, down from 34 percent in the election four years ago, their worst performance since the end of World War II. Klaus Offe, the eminent sociologist and Green Party co-founder with whom I watched the gloomy results, attributed the SPD's loss to its embrace of the Hartz IV reforms, which went into effect in 2005 and drastically lowered unemployment compensation.

The Greens scored modest gains, up from 8.5 percent to 10.7 percent, as did the Left (Die Linke, dark red), which increased its share of the vote from 8.7 to 11.9 percent (the Christian Democrats got 33.8; the Free Dems got 14.6). On paper, and in the dreams of some American progressives, it looks as if roughly half of German voters favor some sort of left party, and all they need to do is bring the parties together in a red/dark-red/green coalition. Unfortunately, it's not as simple as the math suggests. Die Linke, which is strong in the former East Germany, is led by two problematic men—opportunistic SPD turncoat Oskar Lafontaine and former East German communist Gregor Gysi. Die Linke's strength is its opposition to the status quo—"It's the party of no," historian and former vice president of the Free University of Berlin Uwe Wesel told me. "No to NATO, no to Afghanistan, no to the European Union, no to capitalism—but what's its positive program? It doesn't have one." (In fact, it has yet to formulate a party program.) For every nostalgic Easterner and ex-student leftist there's a left-leaning pragmatist, or a civil libertarian, or a bitter Stasi victim, or a Lafontaine hater who wants nothing to do with Die Linke or any coalition it's in. The very thing that gives it its appeal also limits its potential. The SPD and the Greens have said they won't partner with it (but the SPD has recently softened that position).

The election has left me wondering if American progressives, frustrated at being perpetually taken for granted by the Democrats, don't oversell the benefits of the multiparty parliamentary system. It's true that it offers progressive voters a more fine-grained set of choices. Since a party needs only 5 percent of the vote to be represented in the Bundestag, you don't have to worry so much about wasting your vote (although some German voters apparently wanted to do so, judging by the 400,000 who voted for the Pirate Party, which is dedicated to the cause of free music downloads). But that warm, uplifting feeling of voting your conscience lasts only so long: if a party actually gets into power, on its own or as a partner in a governing coalition or even as a dominant

party in one of the sixteen *Länder*, or regions, it's soon besmirched by compromises, sellouts, scandals and gaffes. Eventually that has a discouraging effect. The Green Party, for example, is still suffering because, among other perceived betrayals, it supported the war in Iraq when it was in the coalition government of 2002–05. The SPD not only promoted Hartz IV when its leader, Gerhard Schröder, was chancellor; it could hardly mount a stirring challenge to the Christian Democrats this time around when it had spent the last four years as the junior partner in Merkel's government. The realities of coalition politics give minor parties more power—which is good if it's your party, bad if it's not—but they also blur party differences: after all, your opponent today may be your partner tomorrow. In Germany, in other words, Ralph Nader might well make it to the Bundestag—but he might not stay Ralph Nader for long.

At least in the United States it's easy to make up your mind. I was amazed by how many of my friends here were still undecided the day before the election. The Greens were for NATO. Lafontaine's wife said women should stay home. As foreign minister in the Merkel government, the SPD's leader, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, had failed to extract a German citizen from Guantánamo for several years after Washington admitted he was innocent. And so on. Comparing the very real sins of three leftish parties—two of which

have been around a long time and have thus accumulated many demerits, and one of which carries the entire burden of East German history—can be quite dispiriting.

The media constantly complained that the campaign was "boring," short on personalities and contentious issues. (I know, I know, why didn't the press ask some tough questions and put some real issues on the table instead of sighing and yawning?) Turnout was low by German standards, at 70.8 percent. Of course, for America that would represent a manic frenzy of voting (for all the excitement of the Obama-McCain race, turnout was only 61.6 percent, just 1.5 points higher than 2004). That Germans are so much more likely to vote than Americans may reflect the comparative ease of voting in Germany. Registration is simple; voting is on Sunday. Nonetheless, as in the United States, nonvoters are numerous—and not a random sampling of the population. According to Offe, ten times more nonvoters would have cast a ballot for the left than for the right. So what was stopping them? "Disillusionment," he said. "They don't believe anything will really change."

And as if to prove him right, the latest news is that the irrepressible Lafontaine has stepped down as co-head of Die Linke in the Bundestag to become party leader in Saarland. Whereupon the Green Party promptly entered into talks about a regional coalition with the Christian Democrats and the Free Democrats. Forget the grand coalition of the left—down in the Saar it's "Jamaica" colors: yellow, black and green. ■



Naomi Klein

Obama's Bad Influence

Of all the explanations for Barack Obama's Nobel Peace Prize, the one that rang truest came from French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

"It sets the seal on America's return to the heart of all the world's peoples." In other words, this was Europe's way of saying to America, "We love you again"—sort of like those weird "renewal of vows" ceremonies that couples have after surviving a rough patch.

Now that Europe and the United States are officially reunited, it seems worth asking: is this necessarily a good thing? The Nobel Committee, which awarded the prize specifically for Obama's embrace of "multilateral diplomacy," is evidently convinced that US engagement on the world stage is a triumph for peace and justice. I'm not so sure. After nine months in office, Obama has a clear track record as a global player. Again and again, US negotiators have chosen not to strengthen international laws and protocols but rather to weaken them, often leading other rich countries in a race to the bottom.

Let's start where the stakes are highest: climate change. During the Bush years, European politicians distinguished themselves from the United States by expressing their unshakable commitment to the Kyoto Protocol. So while the United States increased its carbon emissions by 20 percent from 1990 levels, the European Union countries reduced theirs by 2 percent. Not stellar, but clearly a case where the EU's breakup with the United States carried tangible benefits for the planet.

Flash forward to the high-stakes climate negotiations that just wrapped up in Bangkok. The talks were supposed to lead to a deal in Copenhagen this December that significantly strengthens the Kyoto Protocol. Instead, the United States, the EU and the rest of the developed countries formed a unified bloc calling for Kyoto to be scrapped and replaced. Where Kyoto set clear and binding targets for emission reductions, the US plan would have each country decide how much to cut, then submit its plans to international monitoring (with nothing but wishful thinking to ensure that this all keeps the planet's temperature below catastrophic levels). And where Kyoto put the burden of responsibility squarely on the rich countries that created the climate crisis, the new plan treats all countries the same.

These kinds of weak proposals were not altogether surprising coming from the United States. What was shocking was the sudden unity of the rich world around this plan—including many countries that had previously sung the praises of Kyoto. And there were more betrayals: the EU, which had indicated it would spend \$19 billion to \$35 billion a year to help developing countries adapt to climate change, came to Bangkok with a much lower offer, one more in line with the US pledge of... nothing. Oxfam's Antonio Hill summed up the negotiations like this: "When the starting gun fired, it became a race to the bottom, with rich countries weakening existing commitments under the international framework."

This isn't the first time a much-celebrated return to the negotiating table has resulted in overturned tables, with hard-won international laws and conventions scattered on the floor. The United States played a similar role at the UN conference on racism in Geneva in April. After extracting all sorts of deletions from the negotiating text—no references to Israel or the Palestinians, nothing on slavery reparations, etc.—the Obama administration decided to boycott anyway, pointing to the fact that the new text "re-affirms" the document adopted in 2001 in Durban, South Africa.

It was a flimsy excuse, but there was some kind of logic to it, since the United States had never signed the original 2001 document. What made no sense was the wave of copycat withdrawals from around the rich world. Within forty-eight hours of the US announcement Italy, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Poland had pulled out. Unlike the United States, these governments had all signed the 2001 declaration, so they had no reason to object to a document that reaffirmed it. It didn't matter. As with the climate change negotiations, lining up behind Obama, with his impeccable reputation, was an easy way to avoid burdensome international obligations and look progressive at the same time—a service the United States was never able to provide during the Bush years.

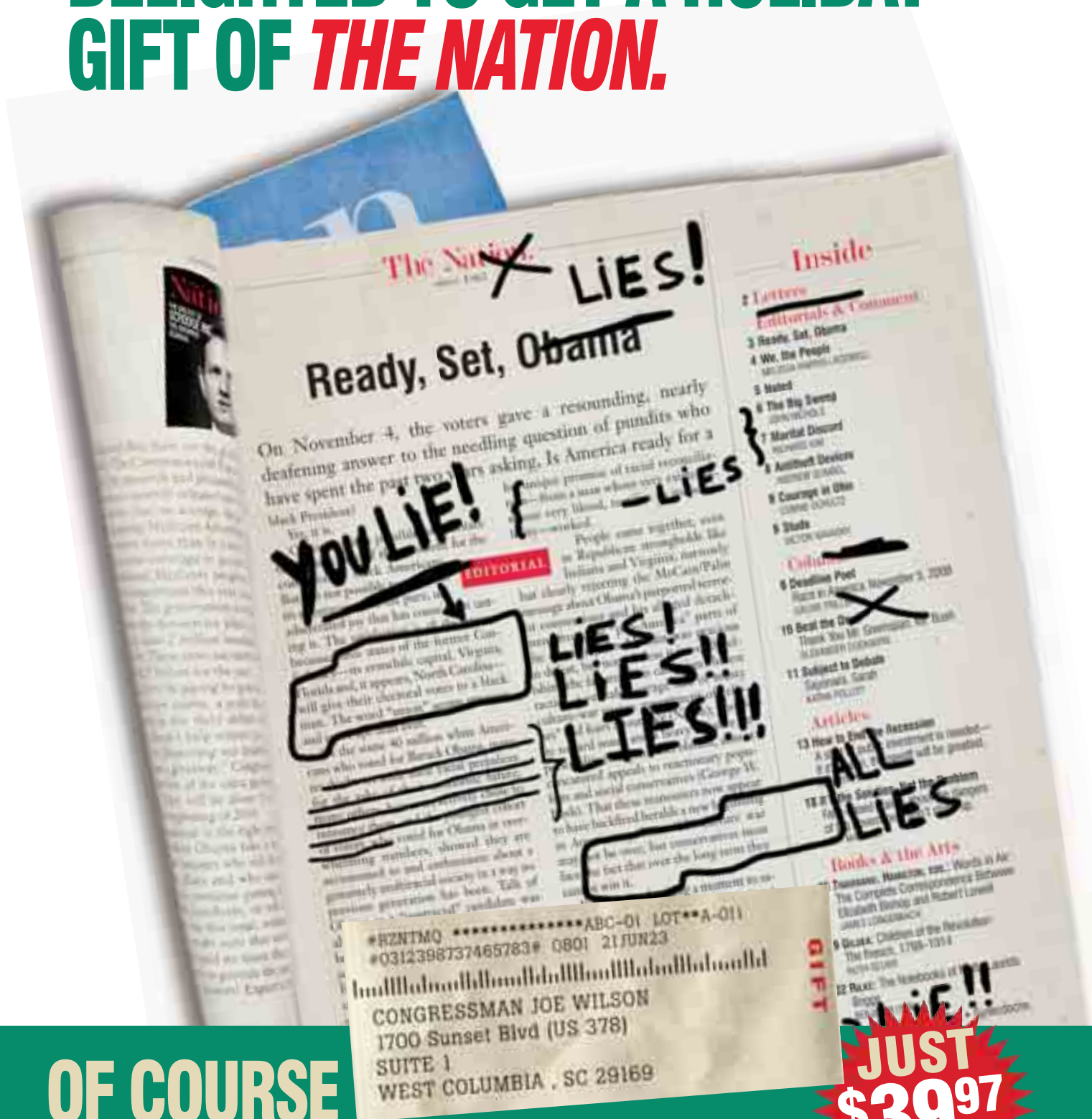
The United States has had a similarly corrupting influence as a new member of the UN Human Rights Council. Its first big test was Judge Richard Goldstone's courageous report on Israel's Gaza onslaught, which found that war crimes had been committed by both the Israeli army and Hamas. Rather than prove its commitment to international law, the United States used its clout to smear the report as "deeply flawed" and to strong-arm the Palestinian Authority into withdrawing a supportive resolution. (The PA, which faced a furious backlash at home for caving in to US pressure, may introduce a new version.)

And then there are the G-20 summits, Obama's highest-profile multilateral engagements. When one was held in London in April, it seemed for a moment that there might be some kind of coordinated attempt to rein in transnational financial speculators and tax dodgers. Sarkozy even pledged to walk out of the summit if it failed to produce serious regulatory commitments. But the Obama administration had no interest in genuine multilateralism, advocating instead for countries to come up with their own plans (or not) and hope for the best—much like its reckless climate-change plan. Sarkozy, needless to say, did not walk anywhere but to the photo session to have his picture taken with Obama.

Of course, Obama has made some good moves on the world stage—not siding with the coup government in Honduras, supporting a UN Women's Agency... But a clear pattern has emerged: in areas where other wealthy nations were teetering between principled action and negligence, US interventions have tilted them toward negligence. If this is the new era of multilateralism, it is no prize. ■



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AMERICAN JEWS RETHINK ISRAEL

A NEW GENERATION, AND A NEW LOBBY,
CHALLENGE OLD ATTITUDES

ADAM HOROWITZ AND PHILIP WEISS



This year has seen a dramatic shift in American Jews' attitudes toward Israel. In January many liberal Jews were shocked by the Gaza war, in which Israel used overwhelming force against a mostly defenseless civilian population unable to flee. Then came the rise to power of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, whose explicitly anti-Arab platform was at odds with an American Jewish electorate that had just voted 4 to 1 for a minority president. Throw in angry Israelis writing about the "rot in the Diaspora," and it's little wonder young American Jews feel increasingly indifferent about a country that has been at the center of Jewish identity for four decades.

These stirrings on the American Jewish street will come to a head in late October in Washington with the first national conference of J Street, the reformation Israel lobby. J Street has been around less than two years, but it is summoning liberal—and some not so liberal—Jews from all over the country to "rock the status quo," code for AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee).

Sure sounds like a velvet revolution in the Jewish community, huh? Not so fast. The changes in attitudes are taking place at the grassroots; by and large, Jewish leaders are standing fast. And as for policymakers, the opening has been slight. There seems little likelihood the conference will bring us any closer to that holy grail of the reformers: the ability of a US president, not to mention Congress, to put real pressure on Israel.

First the good news. There's no question the Gaza conflict has helped break down the traditional Jewish resistance to criticizing Israel. Gaza was "the worst public relations disaster in Israel's history," says M.J. Rosenberg, a longtime Washington analyst who reports for Media Matters Action Network. For the first time in a generation, leading American Jews broke with

the Jewish state over its conduct. *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen said he was "shamed" by Israel's actions, while Michelle Goldberg wrote in the *Guardian* that Israel's killing of hundreds of civilians as reprisal for rocket attacks was "brutal" and probably "futile."

Even devoted friends of Israel Leon Wieseltier and Michael Walzer expressed misgivings about the disproportionate use of force, and if Reform Jewish leaders could not bring themselves to criticize the war, the US left was energized by the horror. Medea Benjamin, a co-founder of Code Pink, threw herself into the cause of Gazan freedom after years of ignoring Israel-Palestine, in part out of deference to her family's feelings. In *The Nation* Naomi Klein came out for boycott, divestment and sanctions; later, visiting Ramallah, she apologized to the Palestinians for her "cowardice" in not coming to that position earlier.

These were prominent Jews. But they echoed disturbance and fury among Jews all around the country over Israel's behavior. Rabbi Brant Rosen of Evanston, Illinois, describes the process poetically. For years he'd had an "equivocating voice" in his head that rationalized Israel's actions. "During the first and second intifadas and the war in Lebanon, I would say, 'It's complicated,'" he says. "Of course, Darfur is complicated, but that doesn't stop the Jewish community from speaking out. There's nothing complicated about oppression. When I read the reports on Gaza, I didn't have the equivocating voice anymore."

In the midst of the war, Rosen participated in a panel at a Reconstructionist synagogue in Evanston organized by the liberal group Brit Tzedek v'Shalom and read a piece from a local Palestinian describing her family's experience in Gaza. "It was a gut-wrenching testimonial. It caused a stir in the congregation. Some people were very angry at me; others were uncomfortable but wanted to engage more deeply," Rosen says. The rabbi has

gone on to initiate an effort called Ta'anit Tzedek, or the Jewish Fast for Gaza. Each month over seventy rabbis across the country along with interfaith leaders and concerned individuals partake in a daylong fast in order "to end the Jewish community's silence over Israel's collective punishment in Gaza."

Grassroots Jewish organizations have experienced a surge in interest since the Gaza war. The Oakland-based Jewish Voice for Peace has seen its mailing list double, to 90,000, with up to 6,000 signing on each month. Executive director Rebecca Vilkomerson says JVP is finding Jewish support in unlikely places, like Hawaii, Atlanta, South Florida and Cleveland.

Jewish youth have played a key role. A group of young bloggers, notably Ezra Klein, Matt Yglesias, Spencer Ackerman and Dana Goldstein, have criticized Israel to the point that Marty Peretz of *The New Republic* felt a need to smear them during the Gaza fighting, saying, "I pity them their hatred of their inheritance." Rosenberg is overjoyed by the trend. "None of them, none of them, is a birthright type or AIPAC type. You'd think

Younger people 'are applying what they've been taught about...liberal American Jewish values to Israel,' says Hannah Schwarzschild.

that one or two would have the worldview of an old-fashioned superliberal on domestic stuff, pure AIPAC on Israel. But they are so hostile to that point of view."

Dana Goldstein personifies this spirit. A 25-year-old former writer and editor for *The American Prospect*, she grew up in a Conservative community with close ties to Israel and has made her name doing political journalism. Years ago she vowed never to write about the Middle East; it was a thorny topic, and she felt nothing was to be gained by addressing it. But when Gaza happened, she felt she had to speak out. "The Israeli government is doing little more than devastating an already impoverished society and planting seeds of hatred in a new generation of Palestinians," she wrote in *TAP*. Gaza was especially dismaying to her because Barack Obama's election had felt like a new moment. "The Jewish community helped elect Obama, and Obama had a different way of talking about the Middle East," she says. Mainstream Jewish organizations' steadfast support for Israel's assault seemed very old school to her.

In this sense, Gaza is the bookend to the 1967 war. Israel's smashing victory in six days ended two decades of American Jewish complacency about Israel's existence; many advocates for the state, including neoconservative Doug Feith and liberal hawk Thomas Friedman, found their voices as students at around that time. In the years that followed, American culture discovered the Holocaust, and the imperative "Never again!" gave rise to the modern Israel lobby: American Jews organized

with the understanding that they were all that stood between Israel and oblivion.

"Younger people don't have the baggage of 1967," says Hannah Schwarzschild, a founding member of the new organization American Jews for a Just Peace. "They are applying what they've been taught about human rights, equality, democracy and liberal American Jewish values to Israel," she adds, "and Israel-Palestine is moving to the center of their political world."

The shift is most pronounced on campuses, where being pro-Palestinian has become a litmus test for progressive engagement. Last winter a battle over divestment from the Israeli occupation rocked Hampshire College, and many students spearheading the movement were Jewish. One of them, Alexander van Leer, explained his support for divestment in a YouTube video: "I spent last year in Israel, where I firsthand saw a lot of the oppression that was going on there. And it hurt me a lot coming from a Jewish background, where I've been taught a lot of the great things about Israel, which I know there are, but I was saddened to see the reality of it."

The Hampshire students are part of an international boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement that demands Israeli accountability for human rights violations. "Gaza gave BDS a huge boost," says Ali Abunimah, author of *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse*. "It is shifting power between Israel and Palestinians. It shows there is a price for the status quo."

The growing impact of the BDS movement can be glimpsed in several recent events. Palestinian activists and Code Pink pressured the international human rights organization Oxfam to suspend the actress Kristin Davis (*Sex and the City*), who had been serving as a goodwill ambassador, over her sponsorship of Ahava, a beauty products company that uses materials from the occupied West Bank (Davis's commercial relationship with Ahava came to an end soon thereafter). Under similar pressure, a Brazilian parliamentary commission said Brazil should have no part in a proposed agreement that would bring increased trade between Israel and several South American countries until "Israel accepts the creation of the Palestinian state on the 1967 borders."

Then there was the Toronto International Film Festival in September, at which a number of prominent figures, including Jane Fonda, Viggo Mortensen, Danny Glover, Julie Christie and Eve Ensler, signed a declaration opposing the festival's association with the Israeli consulate and a city-to-city program featuring Tel Aviv as part of a campaign by the Israeli government to "rebrand" itself after the Gaza conflict. The declaration read, in part, "especially in the wake of this year's brutal assault on Gaza, we object to the use of such an important international festival in staging a propaganda campaign on behalf of what South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, and UN General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann have all characterized as an apartheid regime."

Not so long ago, "apartheid" was a hotly disputed term when applied to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Now even advocates for Israel, such as entertainment magnate Edgar Bronfman and former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, have warned that

Adam Horowitz and Philip Weiss are the editors of the website Mondoweiss, which covers the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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Israel faces an antiapartheid struggle unless it can get to a two-state solution, and fast. Nadia Hijab, a senior fellow at the Institute for Palestine Studies, says such statements are a sign that the BDS movement is gaining traction. "The Palestinian national movement does not have power," she says. "BDS is the only source of nonviolent power and is leading to an increasingly sophisticated discourse, but it's early days yet." Vilkomerson of JVP sees hope: "I think [the sanctions movement] will lead Israelis to shift. People do not want to be pariahs."

In short, the change in the liberal-left discourse has been remarkable. Illinois writer Emily Hauser says she sees it in her synagogue. People once turned their backs on her after she published op-eds assailing Israel over its actions during the second intifada. Today many thank her for voicing their concerns. "The suffering of the [Palestinian] people there is a very, very powerful thing for people to be talking about. The community as a whole is far less likely to throw you out," she says.

What does all this mean for the US political institutions that affect Middle East policy?

There are signs Washington is feeling the changes. Several members of Congress visited Gaza, and some dared to criticize Israel. After Democrats Brian Baird, Keith Ellison and Rush Holt returned, they held a press conference on Capitol Hill led by Daniel Levy, a polished British-Israeli who has played a key role in the emergence of J Street. The Congressmen called for Israel to lift the blockade. After first-term Representative Donna Edwards

'J Street is a positive development.... It's not comparable to AIPAC yet, but in the American context it is very smart.'
—Nadia Hijab

visited Gaza and called for a vigorous debate about the conflict here, old-line lobbyists came out against her. But J Street rallied to her side, raising \$30,000 for her in a show of support.

Alas, those are the highlights. There have been few other courageous profiles. President Obama tried to change the game by speaking of Palestinian "humiliations" in his June speech in Cairo and calling for a freeze in Israeli settlement growth as a condition for progress toward a two-state solution. But the Israeli government has defied him, secure in the knowledge that Jewish leaders in Washington will back it. Dan Fleshler, an adviser to J Street and author of *Transforming America's Israel Lobby*, says he's frustrated by the lack of movement. "What I predicted in my book—that Obama could lay out an American policy and if Israel was recalcitrant about it, and if he took Israel to task in a serious way, he would get enough political support—well, he hasn't tried it yet." Fleshler is hopeful that the call for a settlement freeze isn't the last test. "Other tests are coming up."

Another longtime observer of Jewish Washington says the only thing that's really changed is the presidency. That's big, but it's not everything. "Obama is strong and popular (still). He has a majority in Congress. Many in Congress feel that their political

fate depends on his success. That is what generates the change in atmosphere here. So yes, there is significant change. But I think it has to do more with the atmosphere created by Bush's departure and by the new policies of Obama than with generational shifts in the way Jews view Israel or talk about Israel."

And so when Obama has seemed to lose his nerve—say, when he helped to bury the UN's Goldstone report, which said Israel committed war crimes in Gaza—there has been very little resistance in the Jewish community to his capitulations. When Netanyahu was reported to have maligned Obama aides David Axelrod and Rahm Emanuel as "self-hating Jews," there was little outcry in the American Jewish community. And when we asked Representative Steve Rothman, a liberal Democrat, whether he welcomed J Street, he said he didn't know enough about the group to say, before reciting the same old mantras about the "Jewish state": "It's always good for more people to get involved to support America's most important ally in the Middle East.... As our president and vice president have said, Israel's national security is identical to America's vital national security."

This is the treacherous landscape that J Street has stepped into, where it has been outflanked on occasion by both the right and the left. During the Gaza conflict, it issued a statement condemning not only Hamas but Israel, too, for "punishing a million and a half already-suffering Gazans for the actions of the extremists among them." It was a brave stance for a fledgling Jewish organization trying to build mainstream support, and it brought down the wrath of community gatekeepers. Rabbi

Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, wrote in the *Forward* that the statement displayed "an utter lack of empathy for Israel's predicament," calling it "morally deficient, profoundly out of touch with Jewish sentiment and also appallingly naïve." Ouch.

More recently J Street has tacked in the other direction. During the Toronto festival it quietly began collecting signatures for a letter blasting the protest as "shameful and shortsighted." Although never released as a letter, the initiative didn't endear J Street to the growing grassroots movement. Which is not to say that progressives are not hopeful about its emergence. Rosenberg points out that in its more than fifty-year existence, AIPAC never got the positive publicity J Street got after just one year—a long, favorable portrait in *The New York Times Magazine*. "All the constellations are coming together. [Executive director] Jeremy Ben-Ami and Daniel Levy have a plan and a message, and they know how to work the media," he says.

J Street is trying to position itself so that it is the only game in town for liberal Jews, affording Jewish advocates for the two-state solution the big political tent they've been lacking to this point. Rabbi Yoffie, for instance, will be addressing the J Street national conference, overlooking his ferocious criticism of the organization in January. "Let's have a broad and generous definition of what constitutes pro-Israel," he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, in explaining his pragmatic shift.

The conference is sure to combine culture, youth and politics in such a way as to make AIPAC look about as *à la mode* as the

former Soviet Union. "This is a watershed moment in terms of how people look at institutions," says Isaac Luria, J Street's campaigns director. "The old legacy institutions are dying." Nadia Hijab says this has been J Street's main achievement, transforming the terrain for left-leaning Jewish groups by taking on the traditional lobby in the mainstream political arena, mobilizing money and message. "J Street is a positive development as an alternative to AIPAC," Hijab says. "It's not comparable to AIPAC yet, but in the American context it is very smart."

Political dynamism is precisely what J Street hopes to display at its policy conference. Expected speakers include Senator John Kerry and former Senator Chuck Hagel; 160 members of Congress will serve as hosts for J Street's first annual Gala Dinner. It might not rival the famous "roll call" of luminaries attending AIPAC's annual conferences (more than half of Congress showed up last May), but it is an impressive show of firepower all the same.

The ultimate issue is whether J Street will have any effect in bringing about a two-state solution, an idea that, despite official support, has been neglected in Washington nearly to the point of abandonment. Dana Goldstein is thrilled by the possibility that the rubber will finally meet the road. "J Street has had a great influence on intellectual progressives in DC," she says. "There is now a lobby group that engages ideas that have been out there without political will. They are the political arm to this movement."

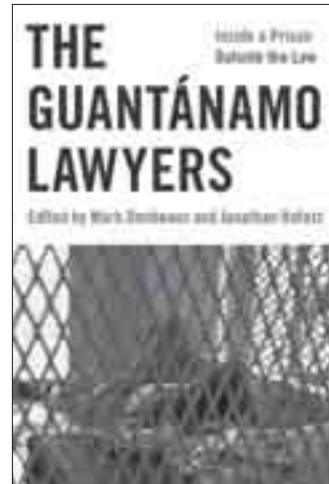
Some critics on the left argue that conditions on the ground have already made the two-state solution unreachable. There are more than 500,000 Israeli settlers occupying the West Bank and East Jerusalem, with more arriving every day, and Gaza remains under siege. Add to this the political scene inside Israel, where Netanyahu has balked at Washington's request for a settlement freeze, and you could say that in the sixteen years since the Oslo Accords were signed, the possibility of two states in historic Palestine has never been as far off as it is today.

Abunimah sees the new organization as having little impact. "A kinder and gentler AIPAC does not represent serious change," he says. "J Street is supposed to represent a tectonic shift, but it operates within the peace process paradigm and doesn't challenge it at all." Still, J Street has clearly panicked conservative Jews. And the Israeli embassy fired a warning shot across J Street's bow in October, when it warned that the lobby group was working against Israel's interests.

For its part, J Street knows these are desperate times for the liberal goal of a two-state solution. As Israel becomes more and more isolated globally, the Israeli government and the traditional lobby have only gotten more intransigent. At the AIPAC policy conference last spring, its executive director warned that Israel's enemies were establishing a "predicate for abandonment" that only AIPAC's faithful could reverse. Don't expect such hysteria at the J Street conference, but behind all the hoopla, the organization will similarly be trying to preserve the old ideal of a Jewish state. "Getting Israel another thirty F-16s won't help us combat the legitimacy issue [with] people who are trying to undermine the right of Israel to have a state," Luria says. "Jews need a state. And that legitimacy window—the cracks in that window are getting wider. They're dangerous. Dangerous." ■

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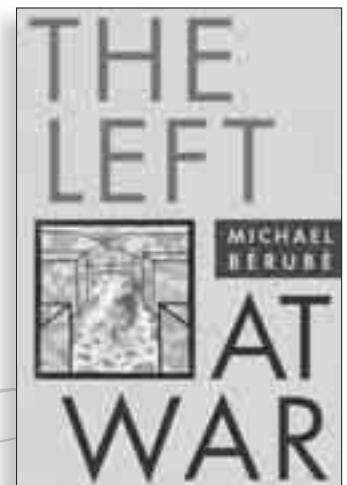


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Confessions of an AIPAC Veteran

Tom Dine used to take down the careers of Israel's critics. Now he's moved toward the left.

by HELENA COBBAN

If you walk along a certain dusty lane in the walled Old City of Damascus, you'll come to a heavy door that admits you to the tree-shaded courtyards of the Talisman Hotel. Last January I was part of a small group that stayed at the Talisman. We ate breakfast in its womblike bar/cafe, under a sixty-inch plasma screen that showed Al Jazeera's play-by-play of the ongoing destruction of Gaza. One morning my colleague Tom Dine introduced me to another guest. "And this is Helena Cobban," he said. "Back in the 1980s she caused me so many sleepless nights! But now we are working here together."

My jaw dropped. I caused sleepless nights to Tom Dine in the 1980s? How about all those sleepless nights he caused me back when I was trying to argue in Washington that Palestinians are people like everyone else and he was the much-feared executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), who took down the careers of people like me without a second thought?

Damascus, with its long tradition of conversions, seems a good place to launch this story. But step back to 1982, when Dine, figuratively speaking, picked up veteran Illinois Representative Paul Findley by the lapels and slammed him against the wall of electoral defeat—to make an example for any other members of Congress who might want to take even a half-step away from AIPAC's rigidly pro-Israel orthodoxy. (Four years earlier, Findley had met twice with PLO leader Yasir Arafat, eliciting from him a statement that offered guarded support for a two-state solution and, according to Findley, "de facto recognition" of Israel.) Dine was also the man who, as he told me recently, spent many Saturday mornings sitting with Secretary of State George Shultz, conferring closely—no aides present—on key aspects of US Middle East policy, especially arms sales.

Today AIPAC is just as much a powerhouse lobby as it was during Dine's thirteen-year reign, but it is much more pro-Likud than it was back then. And it is still working hard to drum up opposition to Syria. Dine left AIPAC in 1993 and has moved noticeably toward the peace camp since then. Recently he worked with the broadly dovish Israel Policy Forum (IPF), which advocates a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. And for the past year, Dine has been heading a small group dedicated to improving US-Syrian relations.

Dine has taken a long journey, from drinking Scotch one-on-one with Yitzhak Rabin in Jerusalem's King David Hotel—



ZINA SAUNDERS

at a time when Rabin, as defense minister, was calling publicly for his soldiers to "break the bones" of unarmed Palestinians during the first intifada—to caucusing with well-connected Syrians in Damascus, two decades later.

Tom Dine was born in 1940 in Cincinnati, a city perched on the edge of the Old South. He told me he hated racial discrimination from an early age. The Dines were members of the Isaac M. Wise Temple, named for the rabbi who established the founding tenets and institutions of Reform Judaism. For young

Reform Jews in 1950s Cincinnati, there were no bar or bat mitzvahs; there was "confirmation." And once Dine was confirmed, he pursued further religious studies at the city's Wise-founded Hebrew Union College (HUC).

"While I was there, the rabbinic students did a petition in support of Martin Luther King's bus boycott," he recalled. "The head of HUC, Nelson Glueck, opposed their petition—well, certainly the visibility of it; I don't know about the sentiment. But the students defied his authority and stood up for their principles.... I was 15. Those are heavy influences."

At Colgate University, Dine joined the Congress of Racial Equality. Later he served with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, got a master's degree in South Asian history at UCLA, then took a job at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington. "I got this terrible, terrible disease the moment I got off the plane there: it's called Potomac Fever. I never got over it!" he said.

In Washington he met Joan Corbett, daughter of a prominent Unitarian family in Portland, Oregon, and soon thereafter they married. They spent two years in New Delhi, where Dine was assistant to US Ambassador Chester Bowles. After returning to Washington, Dine worked five years for Senator Frank Church, four years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee under Edmund Muskie and one year with Ted Kennedy. "With Ted Kennedy, I was ostensibly doing defense policy, but really I was orchestrating his Jewish-vote efforts," he said.

In 1979 Kennedy launched his bid for the presidency, running in the primaries against President Jimmy Carter. Dine worked hard for Kennedy: "It was in the course of that campaign I met the organized Jewish community.... They were the kings in every city!" The campaign was troubled from the start, but in March 1980 Kennedy won a surprise victory in the New York primary. By all accounts, that win was propelled by the support he got from the Jewish community—particularly after Carter's UN ambassador failed to protect Israel from a Security Council vote denouncing its West Bank settlements. Meanwhile, in Washington, the AIPAC board offered Dine the job of executive director. "I said I would go with [Kennedy]

Helena Cobban publishes the blog JustWorldNews.org. Her latest book is Re-engage! America and the World After Bush (Paradigm).

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as far as it goes,” Dine recalled. “Then in July or so, Carter gets renominated.... And I said yes to AIPAC.”

Dine said he thought the style of his AIPAC predecessor, Morris Amitay, had been too arrogant. He wanted to return to the slightly more discreet approach pioneered by Isaiah “Si” Kenen, who had founded the organization in the 1950s. But, Dine admitted, “I did give AIPAC visibility. You can’t grow an institution unless people know about it.” In 1981 he fought hard to block the Reagan administration’s proposed sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia. He narrowly lost that one, “but you never really want to have this kind of confrontation,” he told me. “It’s not good for the executive branch, not good for the legislative branch and probably not good for AIPAC.”

George Shultz was apparently convinced by that argument and started hosting those quiet Saturday one-on-ones with Dine. “We’d talk about future arms sales so it would never come to that confrontation again,” Dine said. “It was one of the nicest things that ever happened to me, associating myself with George

Recently, Dine said, ‘my world became more Muslim-oriented.... I could look with a fresh set of eyes...at the Palestinians and other Arabs.’

Shultz.” Did Dine talk about the administration’s proposed arms sales with people in Israel before he went to the meetings? “Sometimes, sometimes not. Definitely with people throughout the executive branch, and people on the Hill that I respected.”

In September 1982 Reagan announced a new plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace. The *New York Times* called Dine for a reaction. “I said there were some positive elements in the plan,” he recalled. “That went into the paper, above the fold. The president of the AIPAC board called me up and yelled me out. People were furious in the Jewish community and said, ‘How dare you defy [Israeli Prime Minister Menachem] Begin [who opposed the plan]?’ I said, ‘I don’t work for Begin.’”

Dine said he had four main goals when he took the AIPAC job. “First, I wanted to run something. Second, I wanted to stimulate Jewish participation in American political life like it had never happened before. Third, I had always felt the US-Israel relationship was precarious, even though it might not seem that way if you’re on the other side.... But [I wanted to] give some meat to it, make it close and strong. And fourth, if you make it close and strong...and if you’ve really increased Jewish political participation...then Israel can take risks for peace.”

Dine said he frequently tried out that last idea on Begin. “He looked at me as if I was coming from another planet. I barely said it to [Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak] Shamir, because he didn’t understand it either. But Shimon Peres understood it, when he was prime minister for a couple of years, 1984 to 1986,” Dine said, adding, “I believe in strong bilateral relations. But not in a Likud foreign policy. We tried the latter for so long, and it didn’t get us very far.”

The effects of Dine’s campaign to stimulate Jewish participation in US political life were soon felt throughout the land. Findley was not the only legislator who, having crossed some AIPAC red line, suddenly found an opponent awash in funding mobilized through Dine’s nationwide network of donors. After Findley lost his re-election bid in 1982, he published *They Dare to Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel’s Lobby*. The book tracks campaigns AIPAC waged in the early 1980s that Findley thought helped defeat other Congressional candidates, people like Charles Percy and Adlai Stevenson III.

AIPAC’s greatest strength, friends and foes agree, lies at the Congressional district level. There its organizers deploy networks of committed Israel supporters who build early relationships with up-and-coming political figures and keep close tabs on actions and attitudes regarding AIPAC’s concerns. The headquarters aids that process by distributing timely bursts of information on how each legislator has voted on matters of interest to AIPAC. In 1982 Dine hired M.J. Rosenberg to be a key distributor of that information by editing the biweekly *Near East Report*, which AIPAC sent out to members and supporters.

Rosenberg has also long since departed from AIPAC and moved to the left, and to a greater extent than Dine. He disputes the notion that AIPAC’s disfavor has ever been the decisive factor in taking down Congressional candidates. “There were cases, like Cynthia McKinney, where the candidate was already damaged goods, and AIPAC helped push the candidacy over the edge,” Rosenberg said. “But they still don’t dare take down people in good standing in their constituencies, like [Virginia Representative] Jim Moran, even though he does a lot of things AIPAC doesn’t like.” Rosenberg—like, not surprisingly, Dine himself—therefore challenges the argument John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have made about the all-prevailing nature of AIPAC’s power in Congress.

Dine says he has “no regrets” about his AIPAC years. Some of his fondest memories of those days are of times he spent with Rabin. “It’s no secret that he was an alcoholic—or anyway, that he really liked his drink. I used to buy him his Johnny Walker Red. He would drink a whole bottle at a time. The best conversations I had with him were in the 1980s when he was out of office, conversations at a deep intellectual level.” Nearly all those discussions were about Israel’s defense, Dine said. “The first intifada was a turning point for him: when he came back into office [as prime minister] in 1992, he was ready for peace.”

Bill Clinton’s 1992 victory brought exultation to the pro-Israel community. Clinton had, after all, beaten George H.W. Bush just months after Bush had forced a showdown with Yitzhak Shamir over Israel’s West Bank settlements by threatening to link \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel’s compliance with a settlement freeze. And Clinton had many pro-Israel advisers. His first National Security Council staff member on Middle East issues was Martin Indyk, a hurriedly naturalized Australian citizen who had been AIPAC’s deputy director of research before leaving in 1985 to found a strongly pro-Israel think tank, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

But Dine didn’t last long in the Clinton era. In 1993 he had

to resign after an Israeli journalist published a book that quoted him saying, "I don't think mainstream Jews feel very comfortable with the ultra-Orthodox.... Their image is 'smelly.'" Rosenberg told me Dine's firing was engineered by a man Dine had hired, Steve Rosen, "mostly because Dine was always a liberal, whereas Steve Rosen has always been a Likudnik and a neocon."

Rosen would attract great notoriety in 2005, when he was indicted under the Espionage Act, along with AIPAC colleague Keith Weissman, for passing classified information to Israeli government officials (the Justice Department finally dropped the charges in May). Dine said the espionage indictments were bad for AIPAC in two ways. First, they spread "a black cloud" over the organization—"and it still hasn't gone away. And then AIPAC said it would fundraise around this, and it has done very well by attracting funding mainly from people who practice orthodoxy.... If you think there's a conspiracy out there, you'll give money. So AIPAC's fundraising has gone way up. But in doing so, I think it's gotten its eye off the ball. It no longer talks about peace, no longer thinks about the two-state solution."

Dine took his firing hard, but he eventually landed another intriguing job: president of the US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. When he took over, the stations faced an acute challenge: the end of the cold war had prompted Congress to pass legislation that would end their funding in 1999. If Dine wanted to save RFE/RL, he would need to find another mission. In the fall of 1997 he was reading the *Washington Post* "and there, above the fold, were two stories, one about Iran and one about Iraq.... I snapped my fingers and said, 'That's it! We're going to be like NATO, and we're going to go out of area!'"

Dine saved RFE/RL from extinction by turning it into an important lever of US soft power in a broad swath of Muslim (and some non-Muslim) countries. It retained the relatively high journalistic standards it had followed in Eastern Europe, now broadcasting from the Balkans to Afghanistan, from Moldova to Iran. (Washington's later foray into "surrogate broadcasting," with the Bush-launched Al Hurra TV station and Radio Sawa in Iraq, was far less professional. Dine has just been hired by their parent company as a consultant to burnish their image.)

Close engagement with people from other cultures can turn out to be a two-way street. Of his eight years at RFE/RL's Prague headquarters, Dine said, "My world became more Muslim-oriented. And I started asking, Who are these people?... And Joan and I befriended them socially.... I care a lot about these people. So when I left the radios, I could look with a fresh set of eyes and sensitivities at the Palestinians and other Arabs and ask what was this hate all about?"

In 2007 Dine returned to Washington, where he became a senior policy adviser with the liberal Israel Policy Forum. He also took part in the US-Muslim Engagement Project, which issued a thoughtful bipartisan report in September 2008. In mid-2008 the DC-based nonprofit Search for Common Ground was looking for someone to lead a small, discreet project to improve Washington's badly frayed relations with Syria. Dine took the job, and has since made four trips to Syria. When he describes his early impressions of Syria, and the well-connected Syrians

with whom he works, Dine's bony face lights up with enthusiasm. "They are so warm. They have so many of the same concerns as us." When I have seen him with his Syrian counterparts, it seems clear they have built warm working relationships.

Improving US-Syrian relations has, however, proven difficult. Syria has been on the State Department's terrorism list since the late 1970s. In late 2003, when AIPAC's supporters were still joyous about the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, they persuaded Congress to pass the Syria Accountability Act, which tightened sanctions on Damascus. Two years later President Bush signaled his displeasure at Syria's alleged (but unproven) involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri by withdrawing the US ambassador.

Many Barack Obama supporters hoped that after his inauguration he would act fast to mend ties with Damascus. President Bashar al-Assad's government is, after all, a key player in Arab-Israeli diplomacy and in restoring stability to Iraq. It has demonstrated its readiness to cooperate with Washington in these two spheres, and in Lebanon as well. In June the administration finally informed Syria it would send an ambassador to Damascus, but months later it still has not named anyone. This relationship—like Obama's Arab-Israeli diplomacy more broadly—seems stuck in the doldrums. Not even the involvement of the once-feared Tom Dine has been able to free the logjam. Meanwhile, the newer, more liberal kids on the US Jewish lobby block, like IPF and J Street, have shown themselves ready to go much further than Dine in openly challenging the AIPAC orthodoxy—especially on the Palestinian issue.

Dine may have worked for IPF, but he still seems reluctant to challenge AIPAC's hardline approach on Israel-Palestine. I asked him a couple of times whether he thought Obama should push the Israeli government harder on this front. At one point he cautiously recalled, "There have been episodes along the way when the US used the instruments of its national power to prod Israeli change on peace issues—but not since the days of Bush I and [Secretary of State James] Baker.... And yes, the Bush-Baker policy did help persuade the Israelis to vote for Rabin [against Likud's Shamir]." But Dine avoided saying whether he thought Obama should engage in a similarly tough-minded pursuit. Another time I asked why he thought solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was in America's interest. Instead of answering, he explained why solving it is in Israel's interest.

The differing attitudes Dine displays toward Palestinians and Syrians seem to spring in good part from the different degree of familiarity this very hands-on, sociable man has with the two peoples. At one point he said bluntly, "I don't know very many Palestinians." Surveying the Jewish community more broadly, however, he noted that many more Jewish Americans had gotten to know Palestinian Americans, and other Palestinians, over the past fifteen years than had been the case back when he was head of AIPAC. "So yes, there has been a new level of exchange and understanding." Dine has not, up till now, gone as far in embodying that new understanding as the more fearless Jewish activists and organizers in J Street and Jewish Voice for Peace. But he—like many other Americans—has traveled a long way since the 1980s. For many, perhaps including Tom Dine, that journey continues. ■

Kilcullen's Long War

An influential Pentagon strategist plans a fifty-year counterinsurgency campaign.

by TOM HAYDEN

Let us say, hypothetically, that American forces kill or capture Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, enabling President Obama to declare victory and bring our troops home. Would he? Not according to the Pentagon's plan for a fifty-year "Long War" of counterinsurgency spanning Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Horn of Africa, the Philippines and beyond.

Military intellectuals envision a prolonged cold war against Al Qaeda, with hot wars along the way. It happens that the Long War is over Muslim lands rich with oil, natural gas and planned pipelines. The Pentagon identifies them as hostile terrain where Al Qaeda and its affiliates are hidden.

Among the top experts responsible for this fifty-year war plan, concocted in 2005 in windowless offices in the Pentagon, is Dr. David Kilcullen, a former Australian soldier, an anthropologist, former top adviser to Gen. David Petraeus and current aide to Gen. Stanley McChrystal. Kilcullen is a media favorite, the subject of a long *New Yorker* profile by George Packer, glowing columns by David Ignatius in the *Washington Post* and weighty late-night conversations with Charlie Rose.

Kilcullen's recent book, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, presents the case for a Long War of fifty or even 100 years' duration, with chapters on Iraq (a mistake he believes was salvaged by the military surge he promoted in 2007–08), Afghanistan (where he recommends at least a five-to-ten-year campaign), Pakistan (whose tribal areas he sees as the center of the terrorist threat) and even Europe (where, he says, human rights laws create legislative "safe havens" for urban Muslim undergrounds).

Kilcullen testified recently before the Senate that Afghanistan and Pakistan will require two more years of "significant combat," plus another decade of nation building at an additional cost of \$2 billion per month. Given the current military cost of \$4 billion per month, that could mean more than \$80 billion annually for Afghanistan alone, or \$1 trillion if Obama serves two terms, not counting long-term costs like veterans' healthcare.

"Significant combat" and "hard fighting" (the phrase of Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) are euphemisms for the highest American casualty rates in the war's eight-year history, about fifty per month since Obama's surge began in July. Another two years of this hard fighting could mean 1,200 American dead beyond the approximately 630 who were killed in Afghanistan during the Bush years. (American mercenaries working for private security companies



ZINA SAUNDERS

are not included in the body count.) Unless he changes course, Obama will have to justify 2,000 American deaths, thousands more wounded and \$500 billion in budget expenditures for Afghanistan going into his 2012 re-election campaign. Continuing costs for Iraq and rising costs for Pakistan will inflate those numbers considerably.

Civilian casualties strewn across these battlefields have been obscured by the fog of war, but hundreds of thousands of people, mainly civilians, could ultimately die in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, each of them leaving a legacy of vengeful violence.

These projections reveal a staggering audacity—not Obama's audacity of hope but an audacity of martial commitment. A fifty- to 100-year military campaign—the subtitle of Kilcullen's book is *Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*—will span thirteen presidential terms and twenty-five Congressional sessions, casting a long shadow over generations of politicians not yet running for office. The Long War assumes either perpetual democratic approval by many voters not yet alive or that democracy will simply be circumvented by the national security state. Bin Laden will be dead of natural causes or otherwise long before it's over.

The audacity becomes ever more dangerous without checks and balances. Without his acknowledging it, Kilcullen's plan plays directly into what he believes is Al Qaeda's strategy of exhausting the United States militarily and economically. And yet he thinks the Long War is inevitable.

There has been little public discussion of the Long War. The term is attributed to Gen. John Abizaid, head of Central Command from 2003 to 2007; it is endorsed by counterinsurgency theorist John Nagl, who heads the Center for a New American Security; and it has been critically reviewed only in a collection, *The Long War*, edited by Andrew Bacevich.

The world counterterrorism community that is planning the Long War, Kilcullen has said, is "small and tightly knit." This is precisely Bacevich's complaint. In the preface to his book he writes, "National security policy has long been the province of a small, self-perpetuating, self-anointed group of specialists...dedicated to the proposition of excluding democratic influences from the making of national security policy. To the extent that members of the national security apparatus have taken public opinion into consideration, they have viewed it as something to manipulate." The fraternity of counterinsurgency specialists is an even smaller bubble insulated from civic society. They bear a distinct resemblance to the Vietnam-era elite described by David Halberstam as "the best and the brightest," the New Frontiersmen who were propelled to the

Tom Hayden, a former California state senator, is the author, most recently, of The Long Sixties: From 1960 to Barack Obama (Paradigm).

“dizzying heights of antiguerrilla activity and discussion,” revived the Green Berets and ultimately crashed in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Today’s special operatives may track down and kill Osama bin Laden, as they did Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. But the process of revolutionary nationalism will go on under the Taliban or its successors, as it did in Latin America, resulting in Evo Morales’s 2005 election amid banners extolling Che’s memory. Kilcullen’s counterinsurgency model, while giving lip service to winning hearts and minds, ultimately relies on exterminating revolutionaries, whether they are known as outside agitators, conspiratorial communists or, to use Kilcullen’s label, *takfiris* (Muslim terrorists).

The counterinsurgency doctrine is promoted as being “population-centric” as opposed to “enemy-centric,” leading some to think it means a combination of Peace Corps-style development and community-based policing. Indeed, counterinsurgency differs sharply from “kinetic” war, which is based on conventional use of combat troops and bombardment. This is why Kilcullen disapproved of the ground invasion of Iraq and is critical of the current use of Predator strikes from the air, which alienate the very civilian populations whose hearts and minds must be won.

The central flaw in Kilcullen’s model is his belief in the “accidental guerrilla” syndrome. Drawing partly on a public-health analogy, he defines Al Qaeda as a dangerous virus that grows into a contagion when its Muslim hosts face foreign intervention. The real enemy, he thinks, is the global network of hard-core Al Qaeda revolutionaries who want to bring down the West, overthrow Arab regimes and restore a centuries-old Islamic caliphate. Like Obama, Kilcullen hopes to “disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat al Qaeda” without provoking the contagion of resistance from the broader Muslim world. The “accidental guerrillas” who fight us, he writes,

do so not because they hate the West and seek our overthrow but because *we* have invaded *their* space to deal with a small extremist element that has manipulated and exploited local grievances to gain power in their societies. They fight us not because they seek our destruction but because they believe we seek theirs.

But of course, these accidental guerrillas are no accident at all. They inevitably and predictably emerge as a nationalist force against foreign invaders. Their resistance to imperialism stretches back far before Al Qaeda. In fact, Al Qaeda was born with US resources, as a byproduct of resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and earlier oppression of hundreds of Islamic radicals in Egyptian prisons.

Kilcullen would like to believe that the “accidental guerrilla” syndrome can be avoided by a surgical counterinsurgency combined with Western liberal reform, as opposed to a ham-fisted, knock-down-the-doors combat approach. But he admits that imposing law and order American-style in Afghanistan is a “temporary” form of neocolonialism that will produce violent popular resistance.

The strategic dilemma is created when this neocolonialism fosters a corrupt regime of warlords, drug lords and land-lords, as it has in Kabul. The first priority of Kilcullen’s counterinsurgency doctrine is “a political strategy that builds government effectiveness and legitimacy while marginalizing insurgents, winning over their sympathizers, and coopting local allies.” Obama’s recent surge in Afghanistan, whose purpose was to protect Afghanistan’s presidential election process, had the opposite result: sending Americans to fight for an unpopular Kabul machine that committed fraud on a massive scale.

The counterinsurgency in Pakistan, while killing a score of Taliban leaders, has contributed to an even worse public reaction. America’s client president, Asif Ali Zardari, has a 25 percent approval rating, against his opponent’s 67 percent. Fully 80 percent of Pakistanis polled in July and August were opposed to US assistance to their government’s fight against terrorism and Al Qaeda; 76 percent opposed Pakistani cooperation with US drone strikes. The polling excluded the country’s tribal areas, where the opposition would be even greater.

When faced with massive popular opposition, does the

Kilcullen favors soldiering on until the Taliban and Al Qaeda are defeated and a decade of ‘nation building’ can commence in the rubble.

counterinsurgency model call for strategic retreat? Apparently not. Instead, the fallback military option is ratcheted up in hopes of either defeating the guerrillas or dissuading the accidental guerrillas from growing in number. That is why 95 percent of this year’s budget for Afghanistan is still devoted to the military campaign, the exact opposite of the ratio that Kilcullen recommends as the best practice for counterinsurgency. Instead of pulling the plug, he favors soldiering on until the Taliban and Al Qaeda are defeated in the “hard fighting” and a decade of “nation building” can commence in the rubble. This is a faith-based doctrine if there ever was one.

Adherence to the model also forces Kilcullen and other counterinsurgency devotees to downplay the secretive and violent underside of their approach. The cult of clandestinity is symbolized by General McChrystal, whose entire career in Iraq remains a classified secret. What we do know about McChrystal comes from the leading mainstream narrator of the Iraq War, Bob Woodward, in his book *The War Within*. Woodward writes that the key to the Iraq surge, in addition to buying off the Sunni insurgency, was a top-secret program of extrajudicial executions run by McChrystal, which was “possibly the biggest factor in reducing” Baghdad’s violence during that election year. One US adviser in charge of tracking down and killing insurgents, according to Woodward, said the efficiency of the program gave him “orgasms.” This secret program may have been what Kilcullen had in mind when he described the surge as “a truly decisive action” to “comb out the insurgent sleeper cells,” as if they were lice. Kilcullen later told the *Post*’s admiring Ignatius that America needs “black”

as well as “white” special-ops to implement his strategy of “overt de-escalation; covert disruption.” So much for hearts and minds.

That Kilcullen may be the true progeny of the “best and brightest” is evident from his attempt—in 2004 writings—to salvage the US Phoenix program from its discredited image in histories of the Vietnam War. Kilcullen has written that he favors a “global Phoenix program” against insurgents today. “Contrary to popular mythology,” he believes that the “maligned” Phoenix program was “highly effective” in disrupting the Vietcong infrastructure. Under Phoenix, according to the 1971 Congressional testimony of William Colby, the former pacification director in South Vietnam, more than 20,000 Vietcong suspects—many of them the civilian infrastructure in Vietcong-controlled areas—were killed from 1968 to 1971. Run by the CIA through South Vietnamese police units, the program employed methods of torture including electric shocks to testicles and vaginas, and truncheons to the ears. Tens of thousands of South Vietnamese villagers were uprooted and resettled in fortified “strategic hamlets,” in accordance with the counterinsurgency doctrine of protecting the civilian population. Thirty years later the Iraq surge seems to have included another version of the Phoenix program, directed by McChrystal. Countless Iraqis were targeted and killed, while others were rounded up and surrounded in concertina wire under watchtowers in what

the Pentagon and Kilcullen call “gated communities.”

This may be the part where an inbred secrecy ultimately leads to a brilliant but delusional *Apocalypse Now* sensibility, expressed in the Joseph Conrad character Kurtz’s exclamation “Exterminate all the brutes!” The further tragedy of counterinsurgency is that it does not stop in the face of failure but starts all over again from its own ashes. In the end, its secrets will not be kept from its victims in Afghanistan and Pakistan, who suspect and know all too well who is killing them, but from well-meaning Americans living in our own gated communities amid democratic structures that seem unable to save us from a remote-controlled, engineered ignorance.

To his credit, President Obama and his White House advisers see the quagmire ahead, with the majority of Democrats opposing escalation in Afghanistan, with Iraq teetering and Pakistan sliding over the edge, and with no funding for a Long War. There is no short-term way to repair the self-inflicted dysfunctions of the Kabul regime, nor is there any plan likely to win public approval in Pakistan. The military and the Republicans will accuse Obama of failure if he tries to withdraw, and of a quagmire if he stays. Instead of treating counterinsurgency as a holy text, he needs to study the hardest maneuver of all, strategic retreat (like John F. Kennedy in Laos, Ronald Reagan in Lebanon or Bill Clinton in Mogadishu), in order to avoid greater losses that threaten the very promise of his presidency. ■

Exchange

(continued from page 2)

president of the University of California, appointed by Bell to head the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which published *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. Caveats aside, progressives are at risk if they do not take heed of Phillips-Fein’s overarching point: history has a strange way of rescuing the defeated. And that history is learned in schools.

JAMES ANDREW LASPINA, *author*, *California in a Time of Excellence: School Reform at the Crossroads of the American Dream*

COMMACK, N.Y.

What has triumphed is the Spite Right. Its progeny include Limbaugh, Hannity, Coulter, Goldberg, Gallagher, Malkin, Ingraham, Savage, O’Reilly—self-scribbled caricatures who dwell in their own political cartoon, where there are only intrinsically evil “liberals” (Limbaugh adduces Ed Koch and William Kunstler on the same page) versus “conservatives” whose goodness derives solely from fighting them (see ABCDunlimited.com/ideas/rightism.html).

BARRY LOBERFELD

Phillips-Fein Replies

NEW YORK CITY

Many thanks to those who wrote in about my article, and especially to James Andrew LaSpina for referring readers to several important works on California and Ronald Reagan. To respond to the concerns raised by and George Shulman and Joseph Lowndes, who is himself the author of a wonderful book on the origins of the right, it was not my intention to suggest that the recent scholarship that focuses on political economy somehow replaces or invalidates all the work that came before. The field has developed through historians having arguments with each other; but each of the different strains of the historiography has its strengths and weaknesses, its areas of insight and areas of elision. Looking at political economy adds a new dimension to understanding the backlash against civil rights, for example by illuminating how political leaders such as Jesse Helms were able to recast a defense of racial separation in the more politically palatable rhetoric of market individualism or (as historian Tami Friedman has argued) by showing how Southern business boost-

ers were able to win industry away from the North by adopting a states’ rights language that justified their rejection of the New Deal state as well as their defense of segregation. But while the newer scholarship on the role of economic ideas and business activism in the rise of the right has the virtue of helping to explain why and how conservative power has helped create widening economic inequality, finding ways to connect this narrative to the history of backlash and racial exclusion will be one of the tasks scholars must grapple with in the years to come.

KIM PHILLIPS-FEIN

Clarification

William F. Baker’s “How to Save the News” [Oct. 12] inadvertently attributed funding for A.C. Thompson’s *Nation* investigation, “Katrina’s Hidden Race War,” solely to ProPublica. In fact, that investigation was directed and underwritten by the Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute. ProPublica provided additional support, as did the Center for Investigative Reporting and New America Media.

Books & the Arts.



ADRIAN BELLESGUARD

Honey and Salt

by WILLIAM DERESIEWICZ

So here we are, right back where we were a few decades ago and hoped we'd never have to be again: staring down the barrel of global catastrophe. Anyone over 40 will remember the feeling. The numb resignation, the night panic, the sense of a world gone mad. The missiles, it seemed, were already overhead, hanging like a pregnant pause. And now the feeling is back, and anyone under 40 has to wonder what's in store for them before they die. Will they live to see the cities drown, the fields dry up, the

food system collapse? Will they die a peaceful death, or will they be driven from their homes to wander the roads and eat grass? And if the worst does come, how will the survivors find the will to go on?

Novelists have been asking themselves the same questions, just as they did in other times of existential threat. Apocalyptic fears have played a part in the human imagination since at least the rise of the great world religions. The sky will be rolled up like a scroll, or Shiva will burn the three worlds to ash. Armageddon will arrive, or the Tribulation, or the closing of the Kali Yuga. A divine figure will descend to bring an end to human time: Messiah or the Bodhisattva of the Future, the

The Year of the Flood

By Margaret Atwood.

Nan A. Talese. 434 pp. \$26.95.

tenth avatar of Vishnu or the Twelfth Imam. We seem to require such myths to maintain our moral and metaphysical equilibrium—a sense of justice and, in Frank Kermode's phrase, the sense of an ending. But terrors of a modern apocalypse are not therefore to be dismissed, for they differ from the traditional kind in one crucial respect. It used to be that God would end the world, because only God could. Technology has made us capable of exterminating ourselves.

H.G. Wells wrote *The War of the Worlds*

William Deresiewicz is a Nation contributing writer. He was nominated for a 2009 National Magazine Award for reviews and criticism.

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(1898) when the specter of industrialized conflict, soon realized, was beginning to haunt the human imagination. Nevil Shute wrote *On the Beach* (1957) during the worst days of the cold war, right after the American and Soviet H-bomb tests. It should come as no surprise that two of our leading novelists have, in recent years, created works that re-fract the dread of global warming. Cormac McCarthy published *The Road* in 2006. Margaret Atwood published *Oryx and Crake* in 2003, the first part of a projected trilogy of which the second, *The Year of the Flood*, has now appeared.

Apocalyptic fiction is not the same as the dystopian variety, which remains a common mode of social criticism. (Atwood herself produced an instance, *The Handmaid's Tale*, more than two decades ago.) It is not, or not only, an extrapolation of current trends but something necessarily more radical: an investigation into what it means to be human. In the wake of universal disaster, amid extremes of scarcity and threat, the essential drives and qualities are laid bare. McCarthy's figures are simply "the man" and "the boy," allegorically general, stripped of social identities that no longer exist. Their actions, as they plod through a charred and wintering landscape under a continuous rain of ash, address the basic biological needs: finding food, keeping warm, staying in motion. The necessities that even dystopian fiction can take for granted—potable water, cooking fuel, shoes—become the focus of complex exertion and elaborate narrative attention. The moral situation is equally reduced:

You wanted to know what the bad guys looked like. Now you know.... I will kill anyone who touches you. Do you understand?

Yes.

He sat there cowed in the blanket. After a while he looked up. Are we still the good guys? he said.

Yes. We're still the good guys.

So it is in *Oryx and Crake*. For Snowman, the protagonist, staying alive is a full-time job: fighting off pigeons (transgenic organ-donor pigs his father helped create at OrganInc Farms), keeping a sharp eye out for wolvoogs (a deceptively vicious wolf-dog splice). And he's got it easy, what with the Crakers' weekly gift of fish. Atwood, with her customary fertility and zest for social satire, not to mention a long immersion in the life sciences that began with her childhood as the daughter of a field entomologist, populates her nightmare in dense detail. Whereas the biblically spare McCarthy simply

TheNation.com

incinerates the world without comment—no more water, the fire next time—Atwood devotes most of *Oryx and Crake* to describing, via Snowman's recollections, how things have gotten to where they are.

If the twentieth century was the age of physics, it's been said—the computer, the Bomb—then ours will be the century of biology, and Atwood draws her conclusions accordingly. Atmospheric degradation has already done its work in *Oryx and Crake*—the midday sun is deadly, abandoned towers loom offshore—but the real horrors come from genetic manipulation. Snowman, or Jimmy, before the catastrophe, grows up a privileged corporate Compound kid in a world of bobkittens and pet rakunks, eating “imitation Spam” and “20% Real Fish” fish fingers. In high school, he's befriended by Glenn, alias Crake, a scientific prodigy who thinks the species most in need of improvement is the human one. Crake goes off, after graduation, to the prestigious Watson-Crick Institute, where the students in NeoAgriculturals have developed a kind of meat-plant called ChickieNobs, while Jimmy, a technological dud, studies Applied Rhetoric and Advanced Mischaracterization at the moribund Martha Graham Academy (“Our Students Graduate With Employable Skills, ran the motto underneath the original Latin motto, which was *Ars Longa Vita Brevis*”). When the two meet years later, Jimmy is working a dead-end sloganeering job for AnooYoo—cosmetic creams, Jolt-bars—while Crake has landed a top job with RejoovenEsense.

That's when his friend drafts Jimmy for the ultimate lifestyle-enhancement project. Part one, BlyssPluss, a pill designed to recalibrate human nature along the pacific lines of the bonobo chimp. Part two, secreted inside the sealed dome of Paradise, Crake's very own corporate fiefdom, the Crakers, a new human species altogether: docile, herbivorous, innocent. Take care of them if something happens, Crake tells his friend, and when something does, and society collapses from the shock waves of a global pandemic unleashed by Crake himself, Jimmy, now Snowman (he adopts the pseudonym in self-disgust), becomes the desperate, fumbling angel to a new race of Adams and Eves.

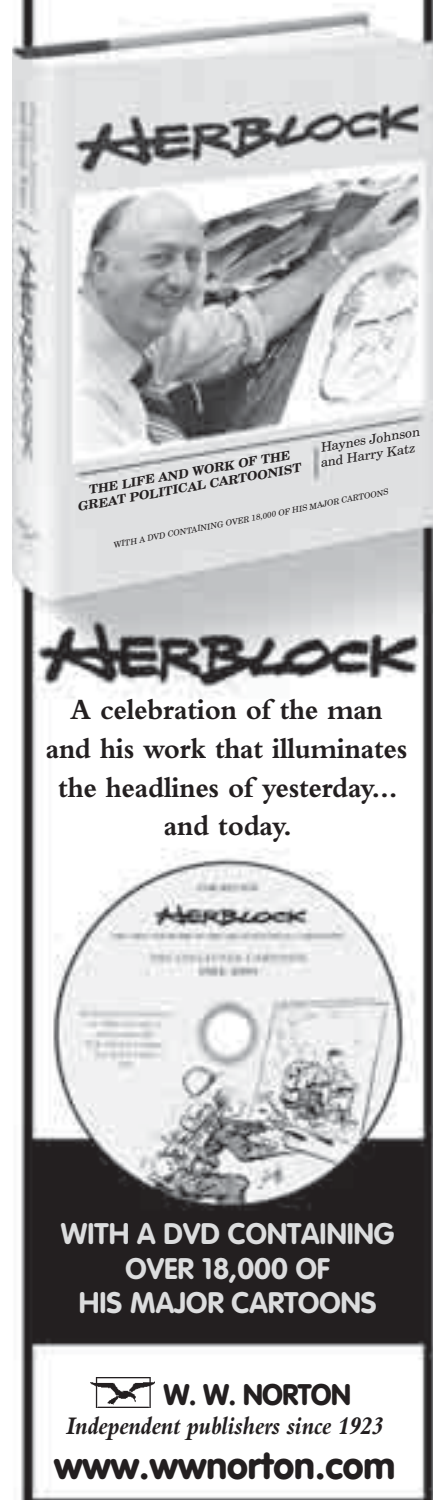
The *Year of the Flood* is not so much a sequel to *Oryx and Crake* as the same story told from a different angle. The structure is identical, but doubled. Now we have two survivors, each as isolated as Snowman but both veterans of God's Gar-

deners, a radical environmental sect that *Oryx and Crake* had glanced at several times in passing. (Atwood snaps her puzzle pieces together with admirable cunning. The earlier book is sown with hints that awaken into meaning only now, six years later, in the second. She's clearly planned the whole thing out as carefully as Crake.) Toby, early 40s—tough, savvy, a little dry—is barricaded inside the AnooYoo spa she used to manage. Ren, 25—passive and fragile—is locked within an isolation room at Scales and Tails, the sex club where she once performed.

The new book, like the first, is mostly backstory told through recollection, but Ren and Toby have lived very different lives from Jimmy and Crake. Both have seen the worst of the pleeblands: Toby, before being rescued by the Gardeners from the tattooed hands of a sexual brute named Blanco the Bloat; Ren, after leaving the group as a teenager with her chilly mother, dropping out of Martha Graham and spiraling down toward Scales. But they have also experienced a kind of Eden, the Gardeners' rooftop redoubt of bean rows and beehives. The group is a hybrid of hippie commune, survivalist cell and New Age cult. They make their own clothes, stockpile supplies in hidden “Ararats” around the pleeblands and honor saints like Rachel Carson and Mahatma Gandhi. Adam One, their leader, delivers homilies on ecological virtue and preaches the coming of the Waterless Flood (a prophecy fulfilled by Crake's pandemic, and the meaning of the book's title). A council of secondary Adams and Eves conducts the group's affairs—Toby eventually takes over as Eve Six, in charge of mushrooms and bees—including the all-important task of training the children, Ren among them, in the arts of postapocalyptic survival: edible weeds, holistic healing and, most important, predator-prey relationships.

All this makes for a richer dramatic situation than in *Oryx and Crake*. Jimmy and Crake were loners inhabiting an emotionally sterile environment, the tightly regulated world of the ruling corporations. Here we have an entire community set down amid an urban slum that teems with danger and surprise. Toby, resistant to Gardener theology, negotiates her relationships with Adam One, a more complex figure than he first appears; Pilar, a wise-woman of subtle spiritual force; and Zeb, “large and solid, with a biker's beard and long hair,” the group's darkly ironic, sexually magnetic link to the “Exfernal World.” (It's a good bet the trilogy's final volume will center on him, his mysterious disappearances and his enigmatic re-

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lationship with Adam One. Like Jimmy and Crake, the two were schoolmates, “or something like that.”) Meanwhile, the Gardener kids conduct their pubescent intrigues, and everyone keeps a lookout for the pleebat gangs and Blanco the Bloat.

But if the scene is busier, a measure of glee has gone from the writing. Atwood proceeds, at her most alert, through a kind of inspired dyslexia. (Poetry, in Brazilian writer Augusto de Campos’s punning phrase, is “afazer de afasia,” the making of aphasia.) In *Oryx and Crake*, the coinages exhibit a special degree of brilliance and bite: “OrganInc,” with its mutilation of “organic”; “Extinctathon,” an online game; “NooSkins BeauToxique Treatment,” which carries a hint of cosmetic-surgery suicide; “Paradice,” the crashshoot of planned utopia. The new novel’s innovations are abundant—“bimplants,” a form of breast augmentation; “carbon garboil,” petroleum made from trash; “Painball,” a kind of gladiatorial combat among convicted felons—but they lack the wicked brio of the earlier book.

The same may be said of the characters’ language. Snowman puns in the Atwood manner, but Toby and Ren, never. The older woman’s voice is cautious, almost muted, and though the younger’s rises to humor (“the football team were known for date rape and I didn’t think Buddy would even bother with the date part of it”), Jimmy simply seems to have done a better job of inciting their

creator’s imagination. His boy-voice is deliciously fresh and crude: “If he wants to be an asshole it’s a free country. Millions before him have made the same life choice”; “The Martha Graham Academy was named after some gory old dance goddess of the twentieth century who’d apparently mowed quite a swath in her day.” Even though Atwood exposes men’s barbarity to women—including Jimmy’s—she seems to have a lot more fun, here at least, inhabiting their minds.

Indeed, *The Year of the Flood* is something like a female rejoinder to *Oryx and Crake*.

Two women, set against the two men of the earlier book. Cooperation and community, in contrast to Jimmy’s misanthropy and Crake’s megalomania. Both nurture *and* nature—nurture through nature—as opposed to genetic engineering and industrial reproduction. A feminine solution to a masculine problem. No wonder *Oryx and Crake* was more fun—destruction always is, be it the depredations of Crake and his ilk or the satiric savagery of Atwood herself. *The Year of the Flood* tenders something less witty and more vulnerable to derision: hope. By the close of the earlier book, Snowman was looking like a dead end; but the Gardeners, both to the novel’s characters and to us, its readers, offer the fragile prospect of a way out.

As a work of political psychology, *Oryx*

and *Crake* turned its gaze on the liberal mind. Jimmy and Crake are joined by a third figure, Oryx, a mesmerizing, mysterious young woman who enters their lives—and their beds, and their dreams—after a past as a child prostitute in a nameless Asian city. This last information sends Jimmy into a spasm of righteous anger. The veteran tail-chaser and pornography-monger, who’d always treated the women in his life with calculated indifference, now wants to play the avenger. Who did this to you, he wants to know, and where, and when?—as if it weren’t already too late to play out his rescue fantasies. The Oryx plot fits a little awkwardly into the rest of the novel, but as an illustration of the liberal conscience’s relationship with reality—the reality of exploitation, be it sexual or environmental—it is perfectly apt. Our indignation at the sins of others stands in direct proportion to our need to forget our own. We seek to save a single thing, and think thereby to save our souls.

From the liberal middle class, *The Year of the Flood* turns to the radical fringe, the people the liberal middle class is most apt to ridicule. There is indeed a good deal of bathos in Adam One’s exhortations, as he seeks to meld spirituality and science, a pious tone with practical necessity:

Saint Euell [Euell Gibbons], may we sit with you in Spirit at your table, that lowly tarpaulin spread upon the ground; and dine with you upon wild Strawberries, and upon spring Fiddleheads, and upon young Milkweed pods, lightly simmered, with a little butter substitute if it can be obtained.

The Gardeners’ belief system, improvised and ad hoc, can’t help but feel a little ersatz, like everything else in the novel’s world. But the Gardeners are no fools. In the middle chapter of the novel, Adam One preaches on the famous Gospel verse, “Be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves.” When Toby is taken into the council of Adams and Eves, she finds out that these humble doves are wiser—more worldly, more cunning—than they let themselves appear.

A good deal of aggression seems to lurk beneath their placid surface. They practice vegetarianism, but they don’t claim to practice nonviolence. Zeb teaches a class in Urban Bloodshed Limitation, and in his view, “the first bloodshed to be limited should be your own.” When the Waterless Flood arrives, Adam One warns, people will be clutching at their last straw. “Don’t let yourself be that last straw, my Friends.” The

Excerpt from The Provenance of Beauty: A South Bronx Travelogue

If I sat next to you, spoke only to you, you would feel the warmth of my breath. As our shoulders touched you would shift, and I would know your movement as response. This is a world and we are in it.

And still, as if this matters, I worry that you can’t see me; I worry that you will go on without me in mind—even as our shoulders continue to touch, even as you carry my voice in your ear. At times I’ve wished for a structure to lean on, a landmark that’s larger than the life around us, something that would govern us all. Maybe I want this because we almost had it. In truth, I was almost our Capital City.

Did you know the longest total solar eclipse that will occur in the 21st century was experienced most fully this summer in Shanghai, in a city. China’s most populated city. For six minutes and thirty-nine seconds, as the moon passed directly between the earth and the sun, for all those bodies all was darkness. I know how that feels.

But daylight is the great extravagance. In the end I know this is true—even if I fall again and again into my private realities—because despite everything I am built out of lives.

CLAUDIA RANKINE

Now I can safely
take a bath again...
...and it's more
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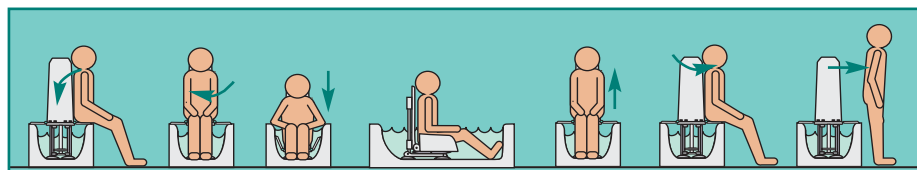
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Flood is not only an event the Gardeners prepare for; it is one, like the most vengeful of end-time churches, that they seem to look forward to. (Whether they had a hand in inciting it the third volume of the trilogy will tell.) Not for nothing do they call themselves Adams and Eves, or count time—like the Christian church or the Khmer Rouge—from the “creation” of their enterprise. Their Edencliff garden is this novel’s version of Paradise, the Gardeners themselves its answer to the Crakers: a new race, to inherit a new earth.

Which is not to say that Atwood doesn’t give them her endorsement. The most repulsive thing about the bogus world we’re creating for ourselves, she implies, is the assault that it perpetrates on our senses: the eye-stabbing colors and skin-crawling textures and headache-making smells. The synthetic names of her synthetic things, fa-

tionship with nature—its dangers, its fruits, its works and its ways—which can only be done by smelling and touching and tasting it. The Euell Gibbons invocation, complete with cooking tips, may sound absurd at first, but it exemplifies what the Gardeners are trying to do: not sentimentalize nature, or aestheticize it, but actually live in it. Some of their saints (they have a full calendar, like the Catholic church) are social activists or spiritual paragons—Jane Jacobs, the Buddha—but the largest number are naturalists, people, like Atwood’s father, who studied nature with the keen, clear eyes of a scientist. When Toby, holed up in her compound after the Flood, runs out of food, she scoops out a cupful of maggots from the body of a dead pig and fries them on a tin can, à la St. Euell.

But it is not finally nature that might save the Gardeners; it is the thing we take to be its opposite: culture. In *Oryx and Crake*, Snowman is haunted by a sense of language slipping away, and with it, memory itself: “‘Star light, star bright,’ he says. What comes next? It’s gone right out of his head.” McCarthy expresses the same fear: “The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true.” One of Jimmy’s girlfriends is a conceptual artist working on a series called The Living Word: huge, single words (“PAIN,” “WHOM,” “LOVE”) spelled out on the landscape in cow bones or fish guts. As the materials are slowly scavenged or decay, the words disappear.

No culture without nature: but equally, the Gardeners understand, no nature—or at least no human nature—without culture. Adam One’s first sermon recalls the original Adam’s first act: naming. To name a piece of nature is to bring it into culture, and it is culture that creates memory, continuity, knowledge. The Gardeners don’t just grow radishes and forage for roots; they enact rituals, sing hymns, teach classes, establish traditions. Eschewing writing as perishable (as well as potentially incriminating), they memorize, memorize, memorize: songs, sayings, useful information. Most important, they use culture to shape time. *Oryx and Crake* begins with Snowman looking at his broken watch. “A blank face is what it shows him: zero hour.” Like McCarthy’s protagonist, whose story also begins with a stopped clock, he spends the rest of the novel suffocated by the sense that duration stretches

out before him like a featureless waste—a succession of meaningless days that lead only to death. But Toby begins each day of her postapocalyptic isolation by remembering the name of the appropriate Gardener saint. Culture preserves the past, and it also promises a future.

McCarthy, whose work has long been marked by distrust of the human word, vile forgery of God’s, could not feel more differently. “Years later he’d stood in the charred ruins of a library where blackened books lay in pools of water. Shelves tipped over. Some rage at the lies arranged in their thousands row on row.” Crake concurs in his own imperious fashion. Compared with science, art, for him, is pointless and pathetic (not a rare view these days). An evolutionary psychologist of the worst kind, he regards aesthetic creation as nothing more than a masculine strategy for getting laid (as for female artists, he explains—just in case we have any doubt about whose side Atwood stands on—they are “biologically confused”). The Crakers, programmed for sexual bliss, will have no need of art or culture. “*Watch out for art,*” Snowman recalls him saying. “*As soon as they start doing art, we’re in trouble.* Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall.” Yet what Snowman finds his charges needing most, and what he invents for them as quickly as he can—ad man turned artist—is, precisely, culture: explanation, understanding, stories of origin and purpose. Who are you? What’s become of Crake? What are we supposed to do now? The need for meaning lies too deep in human nature, it seems, for even Crake to have eradicated it.

But the erosion of culture, in Atwood’s view, like the extinction of nature, is not waiting for the apocalypse. Jimmy lies awake at night, after a day of corporate spin-doctoring, mourning the death of language: “he’d stare at the ceiling, telling over lists of obsolete words for the comfort that was in them. *Dibble. Aphasia. Breast plough. Enigma. Gat.*” For Atwood, the cultural tragedy is not only equal in import to the natural one; it lies behind it:

When did the body first set out on its own adventures? Snowman thinks; after having ditched its old traveling companions, the mind and the soul... distracting it whenever it was getting its teeth into something juicy or its fingers into something good. It had dumped the other two back there somewhere...and it had dumped culture along with them: music and painting and poetry and plays.

It is not nature that might save the Gardeners but the thing we take to be its opposite: culture.

miliar words re-engineered like strands of DNA into trite, degraded copies of themselves, are the verbal equivalent of such affronts: AnooYoo, ChickieNobs, BlyssPluss. Ren’s mother, forcing her back to normalcy after years with the Gardeners, offers to paint her toenails: “Look at all these colours I bought for you! Green, purple, frosted orange, and I got you some sparkly ones.” Her father, a HelthWyzer scientist, smells to her now of “complex chemicals—the kind of chemicals used for cleaning off sticky things, like glue. A smell that could burn right down into your lungs.” Her expulsion from Edencliff reverses Toby’s experience upon arrival: “At night, Toby breathed herself in. Her new self. Her skin smelled like honey and salt. And earth.”

This is why Atwood loves the Gardeners, whose way of life surely owes something to her girlhood in the forests of Northern Quebec (just as Ren’s wild-child re-entry into the mainstream must recall her creator’s own return to formal schooling at age 11). If disaster reduces existence to its essence, the Gardeners have given themselves a long head start, behaving, in effect, as if the apocalypse had already come. That means living simply and making do with what’s at hand, but it also means re-establishing their rela-

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No culture, no restraint; no restraint, no world. "And appetite," says Shakespeare, "an universal wolf,/So doubly seconded with will and power,/Must make perforce an universal prey,/And last eat up himself."

The trilogy is Atwood's attempt to reverse the process, to address the natural disaster, like the Gardeners, through cultural means: to name, like the original Adam; to tell stories, like Snowman; to put our minds and souls in play again. McCarthy thinks the only hope is goodness, a gift from God. Atwood thinks that God may well help to keep us good, but only because He is himself a product of culture. Adam One doesn't spare the theology, but only, it turns out, for strategic reasons:

"What you mean is, with God in the story there's a penalty," said Toby.

"Yes," said Adam One. "There's a penalty without God in the story too, needless to say. But people are less likely to credit that."

With *Oryx and Crake* and now *The Year of the Flood*, Atwood seeks to make us understand the penalty, whatever we happen to believe.

People can't imagine their own death, Crake says, because "as soon as you say, 'I'll be dead,' you've said the word 'I,' and so you're still alive inside the sentence." The same applies on a species-wide scale, and limits the power of apocalyptic fiction. Not only does the genre inevitably focus on the survivors—among whom, no matter how few they be in number, we always imagine ourselves—it necessarily implies the persistence of an audience. Not only are Ren and Toby left; the narrator is left, and we are left, listening to her. Like "I'll be dead," the grammar of the genre negates its meaning. We close the book feeling, Well, at least I'm still there. But Atwood does her best within the limitations of the form, and if the message gets lost, it won't be her fault. "I knew there were things wrong in the world," Toby thinks of her girlhood days,

But the wrong things were wrong somewhere else.

By the time she reached college, the wrongness had moved closer... Everybody knew. Nobody admitted to knowing. If other people began to discuss it, you tuned them out, because what they were saying was both so obvious and so unthinkable.

We're using up the Earth. It's almost gone.



Theodore Roosevelt in Africa with a dead rhino, 1909. Photograph by Edward Van Altena.

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Changing the Metaphor

by RICHARD WHITE

In his still useful *What Is History?*, published in 1961, Edward Carr appeals to the old cliché of history as a moving procession. But Carr insists that the historian does not enjoy a privileged view of the parade. A historian is "just another dim figure trudging along" in the midst of everyone else, Carr writes. And yet, because the procession winds and swerves, sometimes doubling back on itself, "the relative positions of different parts of the procession are constantly changing." New vistas and angles of vision constantly appear. We see certain stretches of the past—other sections of the procession—more clearly because we are figuratively nearer to them. "Great history," Carr concluded, "is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insights into the problems of the present." The trick, of course, is not simply to impose the present onto the past but to use the problems of the present to explain and create sympathy and understanding for people in the past.

If Carr was right, and I think he was, Jackson Lears has grasped with *Rebirth of a Nation* an opportunity for reinterpreting a period that seems almost a doppelgänger of our own.

Richard White is Margaret Byrne Professor of American History at Stanford University.

Rebirth of a Nation

The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920.

By Jackson Lears.

Harper. 418 pp. \$27.99.

For readers of Lears's generation, most of their adult life has passed during an epoch spanning the end of the Vietnam War and the ongoing war in Iraq; *Rebirth of a Nation* covers the era from the end of the Civil War to the end of World War I. The resemblances between the two periods are eerie. Both followed wars that wrenched the nation apart. Both were marked by mass immigration, sweeping economic changes, new technologies that altered senses of space and time, growing disparities of wealth and capital flows that circled the globe. Leaders justified foreign military adventures in the name of freedom and progress. Innovation—technological, intellectual, cultural and social—came largely from outside the major political parties and usually from outside the political system. The analogy is hardly perfect: after the Civil War the nation retreated from aspirations to correct a history of racial injustice and instead enshrined injustice in law, while the recent era has been a long struggle to correct that very legacy. The bitter class struggles

of the late nineteenth century have no equivalent in the modern era, and American expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hardly matches the United States' recent global dominance. Still, Lears insists that our recent past bears a striking resemblance to the half-century after the Civil War because during both eras much of the country was in thrall to "militarist fantasy" and "mystical nationalism." Many Americans, then and now, regarded violence and conflict as the crucible of moral regeneration and national rebirth.

Lears's opportunity comes with a corresponding challenge, for *Rebirth of a Nation* has its own doppelgänger: Robert Wiebe's magisterial *The Search for Order: 1877–1920*. Because all history is revisionist history, it is rare that a historical work survives the lifetime of its author and remains the standard book on a period. But *The Search for Order*, published in 1967, is one of the most enduring historical works of the past generation, despite the efforts of the scholarly termites (of whom I am one) who have eaten away at it. Wiebe portrayed the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a period of centralization, professionalization and nationalization. Americans found themselves adrift as an older world of autonomous, local "island" communities disintegrated; they responded by undertaking a "search for order" to organize, discipline and tame a society that was diverse, industrial, urban and increasingly corporate. Newer scholarship has undermined many of Wiebe's conclusions, such as the existence of island communities in the wake of the Civil War and the rationality of the new corporate order. Yet his book stands—a weathered but imposing monument reinforced by the powerful metaphor of its title. Metaphors matter; they can corral all kinds of restless and fractious people and events, and Wiebe settled on a good one.

Unlike Wiebe, Lears is a cultural historian, one of the founders of the modern field and in many ways its most illustrious American practitioner. He is writing at what may prove to be cultural history's apex; and unlike his previous books (*No Place of Grace*, *Fables of Abundance* and *Something for Nothing*), *Rebirth of a Nation* is an attempt to seize the moment. But Lears has no ambition to be the termite that brings Wiebe's monument crashing down. Indeed, the synthetic argument of *Rebirth of a Nation* depends, in part, on propping Wiebe up. Lears is a bold historian, and a very curious one. He has read widely and incorporates newer scholarship into his narrative, but his portrait of emergent industrial capitalism is not that different from Wiebe's: capital is

firmly in control; the modern corporation is the template for social and political order; farmers and workers are brave but outmatched by industrialists and capitalists. The edifice of Lears's argument is like one of those architectural hybrids found in large cities, the product of the facade of an older notable building being integrated into a newer structure. Some of the building's lines and angles are jarring to my eye. I do not think capitalism was as powerful nor workers as weak as they are sometimes depicted in *Rebirth of a Nation*, but to object too strongly would be to miss Lears's point. We know these lives; we know these events. What Lears contends is that we have not truly known what they mean, and the key to finding that out involves tracing the cultural and psychological changes of the half-century after the Civil War.

Lears wants to swap metaphors: to replace a "search for order" with a "rebirth of a nation" (itself an inversion of the title of D.W. Griffith's film *Birth of a Nation*). The consequence of Lears's shift of emphasis is clear in his book's opening sentence: "All history is the history of longing." The longing in question—a desire for spiritual, moral and physical regeneration—is deeply Protestant, and it is rooted not only in Protestant patterns of conversion but also in the country's secular saga of self-invention and transformation.

It takes great skill and talent to pull off this kind of sweeping cultural interpretation, and in large part Lears succeeds, but he makes two assumptions that are certain to be challenged. The first is that to understand how the United States changed between 1876 and 1920, it is largely the lives and longings of Protestants that are worth studying. Except as historical extras, there are fewer Catholics and Jews in these pages than at a camp meeting. Not only that but the cast of Protestants is a familiar one, including John Hay, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Theodore Roosevelt, Jane Addams, Ida Wells, Henry Grady (the father of the New South), Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Woodrow Wilson, William James and Henry Adams. Lears makes a good case for concentrating on Protestants—a Protestant consensus, he notes, "dominated American politics from the Revolutionary Era into the twentieth century"—but his second assumption is more fundamental and probably more precarious. For Lears, rebirth and regeneration end up being more than metaphors. They are pervasive ways of thinking—habits of mind that shaped the public world of factories, banks, warehouses, battlefields and shop windows. Longing, not capital or political power, is

in the saddle, and rides mankind. This is about as far from materialist interpretations of history as it is possible to go. It is an interpretation that will live and die with cultural history.

Taking a half-century known largely for the rise of industrial capitalism, westward expansion and considerable political corruption, Lears locates the age's significance in a spiritual quest born of a refusal to face the tragedy of the Civil War. Lincoln and Lee may have had a deep appreciation of that tragedy—"a bloody expiation visited on North and South alike for the national sin of slavery," in Lears's words—but most Americans, Lears thinks, reduced the searing conflict to melodrama. They interpreted the bloodshed as a cleansing religious sacrifice, but one not offered on behalf of emancipation. They thought the purpose of the war was reunion: "The idea that the Union had reaffirmed its very being through blood sacrifice promoted a postwar dream of national renewal through righteous war." It was a telling shift, and lingers still. Barack Obama may be the nation's first African-American president, but by sending a wreath to the Confederate Monument in Arlington National Cemetery on Memorial Day, he followed a tradition started in 1914 by Woodrow Wilson, the first Southern (and segregationist) president since the Civil War. "Yankees and Confederates," Lears writes, had "made peace on the backs of blacks. The ideology of reunion was millennial nationalism...but adding a racial component of Anglo-Saxon supremacy." The ideology of white supremacy was well defined by 1877, even if fully race-based

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ANDREW ZAWACKI

power was not dominant until the 1890s.

The regenerative impulse was at heart racist. In a market society where self-invention was celebrated and identity was “malleable and up for sale,” racism lent identity a kind of solidity. In a world of rapid economic and social change, those Americans who could

“at the pinnacle and the Negro barely a rung above the orangutan.”

Regeneration was not exclusively racist, and cataloging its various forms is crucial to Lears's larger project. Everywhere he looks, Lears finds the language of regeneration: in patent medicine advertisements whose testimonials resembled Protestant devotional literature; in the literature of consumption—magazines, advertisements, product descriptions—that promised rejuvenation through the purchase and use of mass-produced goods; in the cult of the self-made man, which intertwined mastery of money and mastery of self. For Lears the search for rebirth and salvation was a constantly evolving phenomenon, yet each new form always seems to replicate the same internal dichotomy, like a new species always replicating a male and female form. The first form, which sometimes seems gendered as male, is the one Lears dislikes and deems dangerous. It was millennial, providential and rooted in vapid ideals, such as a mystical, often martial nationalism. The second, for which Lears has a guarded sympathy, was rooted in experience and championed an older republican tradition of independence, distrust of power and authority, and belief in the dignity of productive work.

A key episode of Lears's history of regeneration is the flowering of vitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lears first formulated a history of vitalism in his enormously influential *No Place of Grace*, and in *Rebirth of a Nation* he expands and complicates his interpretation. Whereas in *No Place of Grace* vitalism represented a detour from and reaction against American modernity, in *Rebirth of a Nation* it is a multilane highway to modernity on which good and bad vitalists travel together. In general, vitalism arose as a celebration of spontaneity. It was in many ways a “religion of experience” that expressed itself in a cult of experience, a “recoil from banality [that] led beyond the battlefield, toward new directions in literature and the arts as well as in philosophical and religious thought,” Lears writes. “These explorations, disparate as they were, stemmed from a common longing—a desire to smash through the evasions of late Victorian life and immerse oneself in a flood of unmediated, intense experience.” Vitalism lay at the heart of “a broad revolt against posi-

tivism, a rejection of a barren universe governed by inexorable laws, where everything was measurable and nothing mysterious.” It expressed itself in pragmatism but also in mysticism, in all kinds of self-help regimes and in revolts against domesticity and the orthodoxies of the Victorian literary culture. It created wilderness as the antidote for the city. It sought “mind-body cooperation.” It delved into and celebrated the subconscious.

Although Lears may seem to be prescribing vitalism as the antidote to the millennial and racist versions of regeneration that arose after the Civil War, his analysis is more complicated than that. For one thing, he does not celebrate vitalism. He is well aware of its flaws. Vitalist racism might have been less virulent and harmful than the other varieties of racism, but it was still racism. Moreover, Lears sometimes sympathizes with millennialism—a “creed of redemptive transformation.” He regards nineteenth-century anti-monopoly politics, wrongly, I think, as millennialist but appreciates the motive: antipathy toward concentrated wealth and power. At the same time, Lears's sympathy sometimes seems to smack of condescension. Because he tells a conventional political and economic narrative in which anti-monopolists are bit players, their many alliances and organizations—the Greenbackers, Readjusters, Farmers' Alliance and Populists—are not given their proper due. Lears criticizes, rightfully enough, Wiebe and Richard Hofstadter for ultimately being interested only in the history of winners; but so, in a sense, is he. His accounts of anti-monopolists are less fresh, less interesting and less powerful than those about empire builders. Anti-monopolists seem to be a doomed evolutionary branch. Lears doesn't reduce them to mere victims, but unlike his dominant figures, they don't spawn new forms.

Lears wastes no time mourning the failures and defeats of the Greenbackers and Populists. Because each new development replicates old divisions, he finds within vitalism hopeful signs. He is very sympathetic to vitalists who sought heroism but were “rooted in lived experience rather than the platitudes of millennial nationalism.” Among his exemplars are Jane Addams, Mark Twain and William James. James sought risk, and he longed for regeneration, but he “defined it more capaciously and humanely” than did the millennialists, who celebrated force and sought conquest. “Everything, for James,” Lears writes, “boiled down to the question of how to escape the enveloping fear that life was essentially meaningless.” The kind of courage that interested him as a philosopher



Former President Woodrow Wilson, with an unidentified aide, leaving his Washington home in 1921

claim white manhood took shelter in it. But the era's racism was not uniform. Lears is almost Linnaean in his description and cataloging of types of racism. It could take the form of “Paternalist uplift,” full of condescension and “universalist hubris.” The Congregational minister Josiah Strong, now largely forgotten but in his time a major figure, best embodied this variety. “The world is evidently about to enter on a new era,” Strong told Americans in 1893, and “in this era mankind is to come more and more under Anglo-Saxon influence, and Anglo-Saxon civilization is more favorable than any other to the spread of those principles whose universal triumph is necessary to that perfection of the race to which it is destined; the entire realization of which will be the kingdom of heaven fully come on earth.” There was also a “vitalist racism,” which sprang from an affinity for the spontaneous and emotional, and was attracted to the exotic, the sensual and the power of the supposedly primitive. “Naturalist racism” was the most virulent variety. It severed the common bonds of humanity and equated nonwhite and native populations with animals. In this “new racial hierarchy,” Lears writes, the Caucasians were

and psychologist was manifested in the risk of belief in an “unseen order.” For James, Lears explains, “betting on belief brought revitalization in this world rather than salvation in the next.” Yet the efforts of James and others to explain that “the powers unleashed in the new century could be demonic as well as divine” were dwarfed and overwhelmed by what Lears calls the “inaneities of empire.” The public struggles of the period that mattered most took place on an imperial scale.

Theodore Roosevelt is Lears’s poster boy of imperialism and vitalism’s dark side, “the public figure who best embodied the politics of regeneration.” A man who “stirred up disorder at every turn,” Roosevelt has been Lears’s *bête noire* since *No Place of Grace*. Lears condemns Roosevelt’s “portentous vacancy,” his “adolescent bellicosity” and his tendency to reduce the new cult of manliness and wilderness “to absurdity.” “Driven by a myopic nationalism and tendentious reading of world history,” Lears writes, President Roosevelt intervened recklessly in Panama and the Caribbean and helped create generations of upheaval. Once he had left the presidency, and was cut off from power, Roosevelt’s mystical nationalism led him to become quite simply “unhinged.” Thirsting for revenge, blood and purification, he denounced Wilson’s initial refusal to enter World War I as the act of a “demagogue, adroit, tricky, false, without one spark of loftiness in him, without a touch of the heroic in his cold, selfish, and timid soul.” Lears’s portrait of Roosevelt is an understandable and necessary reaction to the contemporary celebration of T.R. (see Edmund Morris’s *Theodore Rex*), but it eventually creates some analytical difficulties in *Rebirth of a Nation*.

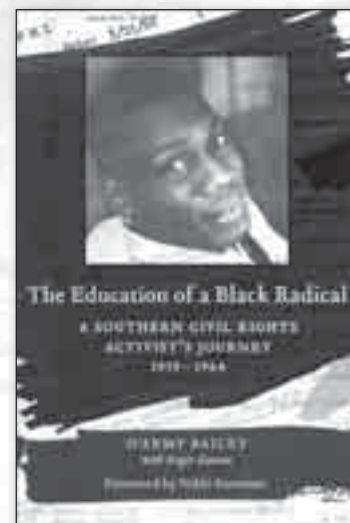
In distinguishing between malevolent and benevolent vitalists, Lears is at his most imaginative and compelling. Vitalists like Roosevelt often embraced force, but Lears sees his good vitalists as less susceptible to this tendency. The fascination with force was not merely “an ideological cover for ruling-class interests” during the late nineteenth century. In a society of increasing middle-class affluence, military heroism seemed like an antidote to “overcivilization” and the selfishness, narrowness and materialism associated with commerce. Lears, however, sees this as an antique strain of regeneration and not the dominant one by the century’s end. Rather than rejecting commerce, the new “modern martial ethic” merged “commerce and courage.” It reached full voice in the 1890s as many businessmen and politicians

came to believe that the health of the American economy was tied to the continued expansion of US markets abroad. Indeed, often suspicious of American capital at home, Roosevelt was its sponsor overseas. The regeneration that began in individual hearts would, Lears writes, “be spread—by force, if necessary—to the entire world.” In essence, there emerged a muddled racial ideology that involved the “civilization of backward peoples on the outskirts of settled society, revitalization of an overcivilized bourgeoisie in the metropolitan centers” and the projection of imperial power and fantasy onto the imagined “white spaces” on maps. But it also could be adopted by those “backward peoples” themselves. Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on “manliness and black uplift” was of the age.

Lears is at his most daring when explaining the cultural dimensions of economic change. In his view, the emergence of vitalism enabled the passing of an earlier “psychic economy of scarcity”—whereby everything from strength to money to semen had to be husbanded—and the rise of a psychology of abundance. Very quickly “freedom from fear meant freedom to consume.” The challenge to the psychology of scarcity yielded a repackaging of Protestant desires for regeneration in “secular containers—a managerial ethic of peak performance, a martial ethic of disciplined sacrifice.” This “rationalization of regeneration” provided the “core of the dominant culture in the twentieth-century United States.”

Its most benign advocates were progressives like Josiah Strong and Jane Addams, who mingled what had earlier often been separate streams of regeneration—the personal and the national. They were practical rather than millennial, managerial and reformist rather than utopian and revolutionary. Lears finds Progressive reform most attractive when it was the most humane and the least repressive: empowering the previously powerless through child labor laws, workman’s compensation and other factory legislation governing working hours, particularly for women. The powerless, however, form an odd triumvirate: women, children and workers. To group adults with children is always problematic. And while women and workers may have been abused, were they always powerless?

But even as Progressives abandoned utopian visions and millennial dreams at home, Lears argues, they sought them abroad. Their longing for new markets and their conviction that such markets would ensure continued



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progress and regeneration "defined consumer demand as the engine of human improvement." For Lears, the Spanish-American War was a tool to heal social divisions and a drug to purge the nation of the weakening consequences of commerce. The war was "wholesome," and enthusiasts like Roosevelt equated it with not only physical toughening but "psychological healing" of "fragmented selves." If this sounds familiar, it's because the Bush administration and its supporters used similar language in the wake of 9/11. Both periods teemed with God talk, divine mandates and "the triumphalist inanities of empire." And many Americans accepted the inanities, Lears argues, because they depended on empire "for their prosperity, for their racial, social, and even moral identity as a people, and for the power that undergirded their dreams of personal and national regeneration." The parade of history has swung so that George Bush and Theodore Roosevelt seem to be marching shoulder to shoulder. "TR," Lears insists, "was Bush's ideological ancestor."

But as the argument proceeds, Theodore Roosevelt disrupts it. The problem is a simple one. Lears is perfectly right to say that the chief purveyor of militarist and imperial inanities at the turn of the twentieth century was Theodore Roosevelt. The problem is that while Bush actually did lead us into disastrous wars, during his two terms as president Roosevelt did not. (He was assistant secretary of the Navy during the Spanish-American War.) But Woodrow Wilson did, and although Lears is hardly interested in sparing Wilson, he sympathizes with him in a way he does not with Roosevelt. Sometimes the lash best suited for Wilson—who was rigid, moralistic, racist, repressive, hypocritical—lands instead on Roosevelt merely for the sake of historical symmetry.

Lears tries to redeem Wilson even while acknowledging his faults, because he sees him as a tragic figure in ways Roosevelt was not. The recognition of tragedy—or at least its possibility—is the moral lodestone of Lears's narrative. Any book that begins with Abraham Lincoln has set the bar impossibly high for evaluating how leaders of the Republic should think and behave. Wilson was a soft imperialist who, Lears writes, "preached a gospel of cultural uplift through consumption." And even though Wilson's "moralism always seemed to bring militarism in its wake," at least—or so Lears sometimes seems to argue—Wilson "was not a mystic militarist like Roosevelt." Lears lends credence to Wilson's anticolonial impulses rather than

his acts of colonialism (such as occupying Haiti in 1915 and invading Mexico), and to his highflying rhetoric of peace without victory despite his acquiescence to French and British demands for harsh reparations from Germany. Lears is willing to moderate his distaste for Wilson's having led the United States into World War I because he did so full of foreboding. And even though until the end Wilson remained a purveyor of regeneration, he ended up a tragic figure. Lears cites his last speech at Pueblo, Colorado, in September 1919, as evidence of the deep religious longings that lay behind his dream of war: "There is one thing that the American people always rise to and extend their hand to," Wilson exclaimed, "and that is the truth of justice and of liberty and of peace. We have accepted that truth, and we are going to be led by it, and it is going to lead us, and through us the world, out into pastures of quietness and peace such as the world never dreamed of before." A few weeks later Wilson suffered a cerebral thrombosis. He "shuffled off the stage a ruined man. The age of regeneration was over."

For Lears, as for Randolph Bourne, "the Western Front was the graveyard of the politics of regeneration." But if that politics died in World War I, it has risen like a zombie. With the Reagan administration, militarist posturing returned. And after 9/11 it was not just neoconservatives but also Paul Ber- man, Christopher Hitchens and other liberal hawks who brandished like a cutlass the old Progressive preaching of "national renewal through righteous war." The casualties of millennialism and regeneration prompt Lears to champion a "politics of restraint," which recognizes the pluralism of both American society and the world, and which is alert to the dangers of any politics based in the search for purity and perfection. But such a politics is hard to sustain, and political evaluation by historical analogy is always tricky terrain. I would prefer that George Bush be Woodrow Wilson rather than Theodore Roosevelt, if only because if Bush is Roosevelt, then Obama might be Wilson, which makes me fear for my country.

But good historians, at least on their best days, do not want to be agreed with; they want to change the terms of the argument. Jackson Lears has written a wonderful history that has done just that. The longevity of *Rebirth of a Nation* might not rival that of *The Search for Order*, but then few histories have or will. Lears has written a book to be reckoned with. Wherever the history of this period goes from here, it will have to go through Jackson Lears. ■

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SAN JOSE, CALIF., discussion group meets the third Sunday of the month, 3 to 5 PM, downtown. Contact Lois at loisaalbk@yahoo.com for more info.

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Events

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Symposium on Social Change

■ University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Todd Gitlin and Raymond Mungo on media and social change: Cape Cod Lounge, Campus Center, October 29, 7 PM. Blake Sloanecker on Liberation News Service: DuBois Library, twenty-fifth floor, October 29, 4 PM. Ray Luc Levasseur on his sedition trial: Amherst Room, Campus Center, tenth floor, November 12, 7 PM.

NEW YORK

Close US Military Bases in the Pacific

■ On Sunday, November 8, the Granny Peace Brigade will present its fourth teach-in focusing on US overseas military bases. Speakers will discuss the destructive impact of bases in Japan, Korea and the Philippines. Protest movements in these countries resist the US military presence. Confirmed speakers: Dr. Joseph Gerson, American Friends' Service Committee; Ninotchka Rosca, Philippine-born activist, Gabriela Network; Dr. Virginia Rodino, Korea Peace Campaign and Asia Pacific Freeze Campaign; Pete Bronson, Korean War veteran. Moderator: Vinie Burrows, actress and Women's International Democratic Federation. Free. Hunter College/CUNY West Building, seventh-floor lecture hall. 1:30-5 PM. Refreshments at 1 PM. For more info, visit grannypeacebrigade.org or call (212) 865-7875.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: \$210 for 50 words; \$260 for 75 words; additional words (above 75) \$2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

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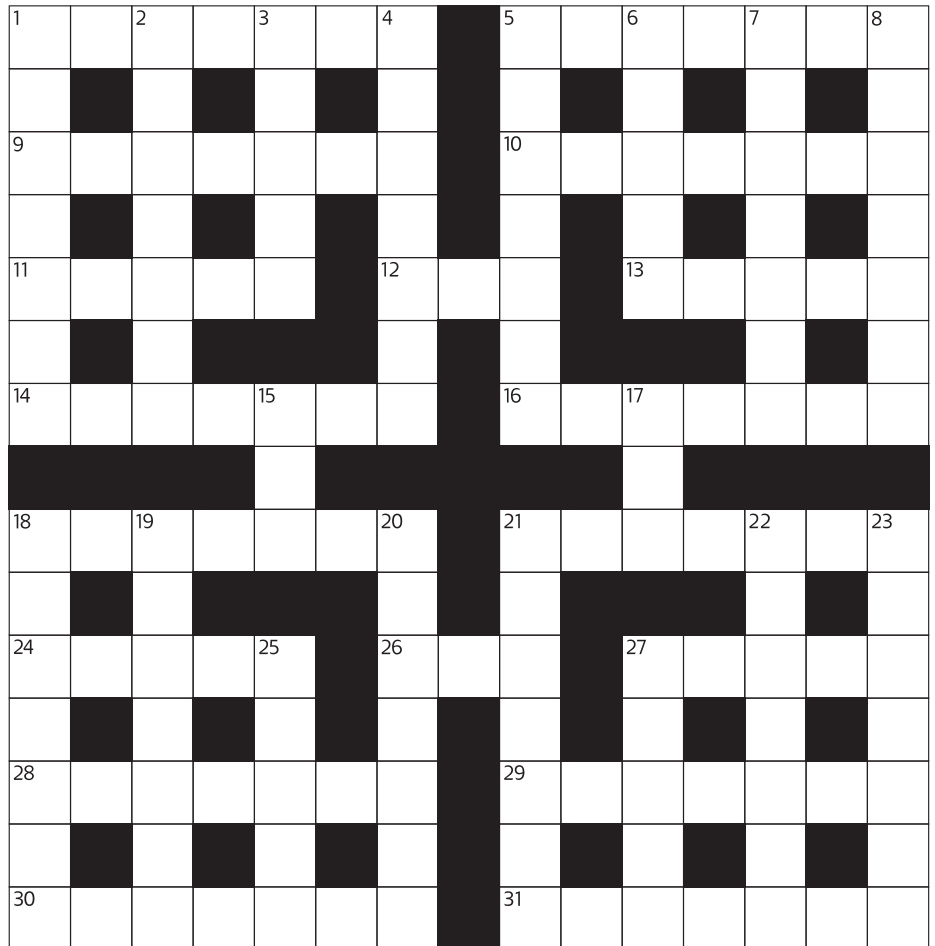
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ACROSS

- 1 and 11 Fools around with noises that the watch makes. Piffle! (12)
- 5 Found at what 1 across have to be, to be good players, being brought into a sympathetic relationship. (7)
- 9 Those who walk around rather aimlessly? Eric is a good example of them. (7)
- 10 Reassembled, thus let go back and forth. (7)
- 11 See 1
- 12 and 26 Make a mistake, also go on one as a chore of sorts. (7)
- 13 Puts some worms to a useful purpose—little pieces around a word here. (5)
- 14 Having a crown on top, when a number took it easy. (7)
- 16 The medic has a garden tool, or a bigger tool for scooping. (7)
- 18 See 17 down
- 21 Red iron plied, it's how things are straightened out. (2,5)
- 24 Just the opposite of 21 across, like a young lady. (5)
- 26 See 12
- 27 Lava I mix to be of some use. (5)
- 28 Free in the camping spot—the gladiator found one handy. (7)
- 29 A fast way to go to heaven—like the old Red leader. (7)
- 30 Not a part-time soldier as a usual example. (7)
- 31 Evidently the writer (Sir Henry) looks all done in. (7)

DOWN

- 1 Frenzied like a French caper! (7)
- 2 A real no-brainer, and the girl coming out with a lace arrangement shows it. (3)
- 3 Broken lines involve legal claims. (5)
- 4 Our country has to get rid of money around it, one way to hold things up. (7)
- 5 A stupid fellow, sort of rude, as you can be certain. (7)
- 6 Sometimes those in need of a lift use this. (5)
- 7 The absence of anything like night on such, possibly. (7)
- 8 A piece of furniture many an actor needs. (7)
- 15 The ship's deserter comes up with an old sailor. (3)
- 17 and 18 across With a "me first" attitude? (10)
- 18 A lot of racket, with a large number over the second part. (7)
- 19 What the cop is doing by catching a criminal—though the carpenter might be doing it, too! (7)
- 20 Part of the book is likely to get expensive in Paris around it. (7)
- 21 A spot of trouble when you're this way—but that's the way Rembrandt spoke! (2,5)
- 22 You won't get any water lower than this. (4,3)
- 23 Passed on in the race. (You hear eggs can't be!) (7)
- 25 One of the things you can do with a bee, for a time. (5)
- 27 A wild mango in the midst of things. (5)



SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3188

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Mr. Netanyahu's Offer (II)

Are the objections of the Palestinians justified?

In our previous *hasbarah message* (#117, "**Mr. Netanyahu's Offer [I]**"), we told of the Netanyahu's government's willingness to allow a Palestinian state to arise alongside Israel in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and in Gaza. Not surprisingly, he attached certain conditions to this offer, all of which the Palestinians totally rejected. The objections that we discussed previously referred to the "settlements," the demilitarization of the new state, and the "return of the refugees."

What are the facts?

In addition to those conditions mentioned above, Mr. Netanyahu's offer of a state for the Palestinians in the "West Bank" and in Gaza included two further requirements: One, that Jerusalem remain the undivided capital of Israel and two, that the Arabs recognize Israel to be the Jewish state.

An Undivided Jerusalem.

Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israel defense forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Muslim city were rarely if ever asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side-by-side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Muslim Arabs declared their desire to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city into Arab possession.

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city to Israel in the Six-Day War. It has now gained currency by dint of constant repetition. Basis of the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, the Temple Mount, sacred to both Muslims and Jews. But Jerusalem has for centuries been the capital of the Jewish people and has been the capital of Israel since its founding. It is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible. There is not a single mention of it in the Koran.

Israel is the State of the Jews. Mr. Netanyahu insists that Israel be recognized as the Jewish state. But such recognition is obviously only a formality. Israel was established as the Jewish state by the Balfour Declaration, by the League of Nations, by the United Nations, by the consensus of the world, and by the facts on the ground. The reason that the Muslims do not wish to recognize Israel as a Jewish state is that it would supposedly prejudice the rights of the Muslims and perhaps members of other religions who live in Israel. But that is nonsense. Regardless of what it is called, everybody understands that Israel

is indeed the State of the Jews, and so do the over 1 million (approximately 20% of Israel's population) Muslims that live in Israel as full citizens, with all the rights and privileges of their Jewish fellow citizens. Nobody seems to object that, for instance,

Iran designates itself as an "Islamic Republic." For the Muslim world to recognize Israel as the State of the Jews would simply be recognizing reality.

It has to be clear to every student of modern history that the Palestinians, if that were their real goal, could have had their

"Here is another chance for the Palestinians to have their own country... Chances are overwhelming that, once again, they will reject the outstretched hand...."

own state since at least 1937, following the Peel Report. There have been many opportunities since. The most important of those was the 1948 decision of the United Nations to partition the country west of the Jordan River into a Muslim and a Jewish state. The Jews eagerly accepted the proposal, which the Arabs utterly rejected and instead invaded the nascent state of Israel with the armies of five of their countries. There have been many other opportunities since, all of which the Muslims have rejected. One must come to the unhappy conclusion that to create a state is not the ultimate goal of the Palestinians. The ultimate goal always has been and continues to be the destruction of the state of Israel.

Mr. Netanyahu's offer of allowing a Palestinian state to be created and to exist along Israel is a most generous offer. No parallel can be found in the annals of world history. It is abundantly clear that the "conditions" accompanying Mr. Netanyahu's offer are more than reasonable. Surely, after decades of open hostilities and the recent bitter example of Gaza, it should go without saying that the newly formed state should be totally and reliably demilitarized. It should be clear that the "settlements" – about 300,000 Jews in a sea of over 3 million Arabs – cannot be an obstacle to peace, since the over 1 million Arabs living in Israel are not considered a problem. It should be clear that the "refugees," which have swelled from the original 650,000 to allegedly more than 5 million, should be settled in the newly to be formed state of Palestine.

Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life and Jewish yearning for over 3,000 years. There is no reason why it should not remain the undivided capital of Israel. And, of course, Israel is a Jewish state. Everybody understands that, whether the Muslims do or do not wish to accept it. Here is another chance for the Palestinians to have their own country and to live in peace and in prosperity alongside Israel. But chances are overwhelming that, once again, they will reject the outstretched hand that is being offered.

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